

(Re)Conversion Matters

Susheel Kumar Sharma*

Abstract

This paper establishes religious conversion in India as a complex socio-political act rather than a purely theological decision. It examines the conversion in India as a critical barometer of the tension between constitutional secularism and socio-religious realities. The author contends that conversion functions as a critical determinant of national narrative and socio-political power. The core argument posits a fundamental conflict between the “open-source,” non-creedal framework of Sanatana Dharma and the exclusive, proselytizing mandates of Abrahamic faiths. The author argues that while Hinduism emphasizes orthopraxy and lacks a formal concept of apostasy, the rigid entry-exit requirements of Christianity and Islam are often perceived as a “cultural invasion” that threatens indigenous identity and demographic stability. The paper also analyses how Hindus feel dented in their encounters with Abrahamic faiths over the centuries.

Furthermore, the paper investigates the historical evolution of “homecoming” movements, tracing the methodological shift from Adi Shankara’s intellectual Shastrartha to the Arya Samaj’s reformist Shuddhi and the contemporary Ghar Wapsi initiatives, and establishes a historical continuity between medieval resistance to forced conversion and modern reclamation movements like Shuddhi and Ghar Wapsi. It evaluates the legal landscape, specifically Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, which distinguishes the right to “propagate” from the right to “convert”. Finally, the study addresses the socio-political implications of conversion, including demographic anxieties and the “Good Cop, Bad Cop” dynamic between the BJP and VHP regarding institutional distancing from aggressive reconversion tactics. Ultimately, the paper contends that conversion is not merely a personal change of faith but a profound socio-political negotiation of power and national narrative in post-colonial India.

Keywords: Anti-Conversion Laws, Apostasy, Article 25, Ghar Wapsi, Hindu Nationalism, Indian Secularism, Religious Conversion, Proselytization, Sanatana Dharma, Socio-political Power.

**Susheel Kumar Sharma is Professor of English, Department of English & Modern European Languages, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj – 211002, UP, INDIA; Email: <sksharma@allduniv.ac.in>, ORCID: 0000-0002-2220-072X*

Introduction: Context, Thesis, and Scope

India's national identity is fundamentally predicated on its immense religious pluralism, having served as the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, alongside hosting centuries-old communities of Muslims, Christians, and others. Hinduism forms the dominant cultural and religious landscape, comprising nearly 80% of the population². It is the land where all religions have not only survived but also prospered. Even though conversion is supposed to happen naturally and theologically whenever a new religion establishes itself, it has consistently been a significant social, economic, and political act embedded within the prevailing power hierarchies. The issue of converting one's faith is one of the most intensely debated and politically charged topics in the modern world, including India. The post-colonial era has seen a transition of religious affiliations from a purely personal matter of faith to a critical determinant of socio-political power and national narrative.

An incidence of conversion is not merely a religious phenomenon or a theological decision but a socio-economic, legal, and political negotiation of an individual's place in the realm (both real and imaginary) around him/ her. Therefore, the five factors need to be studied to develop some understanding of this complex individual/ social issue: i) Religious (including philosophical aspects) moorings which have shaped the life-styles (e.g., *The Vedas*, *The Bible*, *The Koran* etc.) ii) The norms that have entered into the books which act as guide books for regulating one's daily routine (e.g. *Smritis*, *The Didache*, *Hadith* etc.) iii) The practices that have not entered into books but are followed just by tradition (e.g. various rituals/ practices generally described as folk traditions) iv) laws that have been enacted by the ruling agents (e.g. the state in the form of kings or parliaments etc.) and v) The Socio-Economic and Power Dynamics (The Material Base).

Despite the Vedic affirmation of unity in diversity — "*ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti*" ("Truth is one, though the sages know it by many names," *Rig Veda* 1.164.46)³ — the philosophical, social, political, and demographic anxieties surrounding changes in religious affiliation have consistently made religious conversion a central flashpoint in Indian public life. This tension is often framed as a conflict between worldviews: Hinduism emphasizes *dharma* as a fluid, contextual, and non-exclusive way of life that accepts multiple paths to one truth (*sarva dharma samabhava*), lacking a centralized conversion ritual and viewing mass proselytization as inherently disruptive; whereas Abrahamic Faiths are often perceived as requiring formal, exclusive entry and exit, often mandating conversion as a prerequisite for salvation, which fuels anxieties regarding cultural erasure. The act of conversion is viewed by critics as not merely a change of faith but a profound disruption, as converts often abandon ancestral practices, customs, and kinship ties, potentially breeding disdain for their origins and challenging the inherent pluralism.

Beyond the personal, conversions carry heavy social and political costs, cited as fracturing the joint family (*kutumb*) and caste networks that provide India's primary social safety nets,

disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups who are lured by aid, jobs, or marriage. This concern is amplified by the political reality that numbers translate to electoral power, leading to the fear of demographic dilution via targeted conversions, through foreign-funded rackets or instances of “love jihad.”

In response to these perceived threats and amid historical traumas stemming from colonial proselytization, over ten states have enacted anti-conversion laws. The mass religious conversion (in Meenakshipuram, Tamil Nadu in 1981) in which hundreds of caste Hindus converted to Islam, most of them forcibly (though later, many converts re-converted to Hinduism, citing the lack of fulfilment of promises made during the conversions) sparked debate over freedom of religion in India⁴. It triggered the government’s decision to introduce anti-conversion legislation. These statutes aim to preserve social cohesion by curbing conversions achieved through fraud, allurement, or force, viewing such shifts as direct threats to indigenous cultural and religious identity. The Constitution enshrines the right to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion (Article 25). However, the Supreme Court ruling [1977 AIR 908, 1977 SCR (2) 611, 1977 SCC (1) 677] has critically clarified that the right to *propagation* is not a right to convert, seeking to balance individual religious freedom with the imperative of maintaining secular and social harmony. A brief mention of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950 issued by the president of India⁵ may not be out of place here. According to this order, the scheduled castes who convert to religions other than Hinduism are no longer regarded among scheduled castes. Subsequent amendments to the presidential order have permitted conversion to Buddhism and Sikhism without a loss of SC status but not conversion to Christianity or Islam. As a result, a scheduled caste person loses his/her SC status upon conversion to Christianity. Conversely, scheduled tribes have rights to land and reservations that they do not lose upon conversion to any religion.

This paper thus explores the critical intersection of constitutional freedom, theological difference, and political/ social/ economic demography, arguing that the controversy over religious conversion serves as a crucial barometer of the ongoing conflict between India’s constitutional secular ideals and its complex socio-religious realities.

“The Jews and Christians each claim that none will enter Paradise except those of their own faith.” (*Qur’an* 2:111). And according to the *Quaranic* (40:40) belief, Islam is a must for finding an entry into Heaven: “And whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, they will enter Paradise, where they will be provided for without limit.” (*Qur’an* 40:40). However, for a Hindu *Moksha* (freedom from the cycle of birth and death) is a *purushartha* and not his/her entry into Heaven.

A comparative perspective on the concept and consequences of apostasy (the formal renunciation or abandonment of one’s religion) in Abrahamic religions and Hinduism also helps

one understand the issue of conversion and re-conversion. Abrahamic religions view apostasy as a serious crime and theological transgression against an exclusive God, punishable by death and eternal damnation. Hinduism, by being non-creedal, pluralistic, and non-totalitarian, views the change of religion or even outright atheism as an individual choice falling outside the scope of religious governance or punishment.

In the Abrahamic faiths, which are built on exclusive monotheism and adherence to a divine covenant or singular truth, apostasy is viewed not merely as a change of opinion but as a severe transgression against God. This view necessitates both temporal and eternal penalties:

- Judaism (Old Testament) suggests “You must certainly put [the apostates] to death.” (Deuteronomy 13:9) Idolatry and enticing others away from the covenant are treated as a form of religious treason, warranting the most extreme temporal punishment. Deuteronomy (13:9) explicitly mandates death by stoning for the offender, with the community expected to participate in the execution.

- Christianity (New Testament) emphasizes severe and final divine judgment for the apostate, seeing it as a deliberate rejection of God’s truth and grace after having known it. Hebrews (10:26-27) warns that such an act leaves “no further sacrifice remains” for sins, only a “fearful expectation of judgment and consuming fire.” Revelation (21:8) places apostates alongside the wicked condemned to the “second death — a fiery lake of burning sulfur.” The Church also started punishing persons physically by formally instituting the Inquisition in Europe and elsewhere.

- Islam views apostasy as a betrayal of God’s final revelation and the community (*Ummah*). Traditional legal schools mandate the death penalty for the apostate, provided they do not repent. This is directly supported by the Hadith, which instructs, “Whoever changes his religion, kill him.”⁶

Thus, in the Abrahamic traditions, apostasy is considered a non-negotiable, capital offense that carries the dual threat of execution in this life and eternal damnation in the next, reinforcing a totalitarian doctrine in the sense of absolute, exclusive demand for spiritual allegiance.

In sharp contrast, Hinduism lacks any formal concept or legal/theological framework for ‘apostasy’ and, consequently, does not prescribe punishment for leaving the faith. This difference stems from the fundamental nature of Hinduism as a diverse, non-creedal tradition.

- Absence of Doctrine: There is no concept of Apostasy in Hinduism because the tradition is not founded on a single prophet, single scripture, or single set of dogmas that must be exclusively followed under threat of penalty.

- Freedom to Question (Blasphemy): There is no punishment for blasphemy because Hinduism does not demand unquestioning adherence. One can brazenly question the existence of God or the authority of the scriptures. This tradition of debate (*Shastrartha*) and skeptical

inquiry is millennia old and is not considered blasphemy. The *Nasadiya Sukta* (*Rigveda* 10.129)⁷, a core Vedic hymn, itself raises profound questions about the creation and whether even the highest gods know the ultimate truth—an act of theological scepticism at the source of the tradition.

- Acceptance of Atheistic Schools: Atheism is not only tolerated but is codified within the traditional framework of Hindu philosophy. The Charvaka (or Lokayata) school of thought, which explicitly espoused the non-existence of God and prioritized the material world, is given equal footing (*Darshana*) with theistic schools like Nyaya, Yoga, and the dualistic Sankhya school.

- Open-Source Religion: Hinduism is often characterized as an “open-source religion” — an individual is free to follow, modify, critique, or leave the tradition as they please without facing

Antiquity of Religious Faiths: Sanatan Dharma (popularly known as Hinduism) is the oldest in the prevailing faiths of the World with no written history of its starting point. Other faiths have tried to document their origination. A comparison of these faiths is drawn in Table 1:

Table 1

Religion	Approximate Origin Period	Key Historical/ Foundational Events
Hinduism	~9000 BCE – 1500 BCE	Emergenced from the fusion of the Saraswati Valley Civilization and Indus-Valley Civilization. The earliest sacred texts, the Vedas, were composed orally from about 1500 BCE, with the oldest, the <i>Rigveda</i> , dating to about 9000–1200 BCE.
Judaism	~2000 BCE (Patriarchal Age)	Traced back to the covenant between God and Abraham (~2000 BCE). The foundational event is the Exodus and the revelation of the Torah to Moses (~13th century BCE). The <i>Torah</i> (first five books of the Bible/Tanakh) contains the earliest written laws and history, compiled in its current form in the 5th century BCE.
Jainism	~7 th –6 th Century BCE	Traditions trace back much earlier, but the religion was formalized by the last Tirthankara, Mahavira (~599 BCE – 527 BCE), who established the current principles. Texts were transmitted orally before being written down much later.

Buddhism	~6 th Century BCE	Founded by Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha), who achieved enlightenment around 500 BCE. His teachings were orally transmitted and later written down in scriptures like the <i>Tripitaka</i> , with the earliest parts dating to the 1st century BCE.
Christianity	1 st Century CE	Centred on the life, death, and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth (c. 4 BCE – c. 30 CE). The <i>New Testament</i> books, which form the core Christian scripture, were written by various authors between c. 50 CE and 100 CE.
Islam	7 th Century CE	Founded by the Prophet Muhammad (c. 570 CE – 632 CE). The religion began with his first revelation in 610 CE, and the founding event of the Muslim era is the Hijra (migration from Mecca to Medina) in 622 CE. The revelations were compiled into the <i>Qur'an</i> shortly after his death.

institutional or legal retribution. The focus is on *Dharma* (righteous conduct) and *Moksha* (liberation), which can be pursued through countless paths, including non-theistic ones.

Since Hinduism (Jainism and Buddhism in the above table may be treated as parts of the broad rubric of Hinduism, as all of them have faith in the doctrines of Karma, rebirth, and Moksha) happens to be the oldest religious faith, there are no references to other religions in its books, ancient discourses or philosophy in the canonical texts. There are neither references to the issue of conversion nor are there any issues related to conversion. There are four reasons for this: i) the rishis of the yore explored eternal and ethical truths about life and nature that were lofty and sublime ii) they did not claim that whatever they were saying was the absolute truth iii) none of their findings was meant only for their followers and hence there was no other for them and iv) none of them started a school of thought/ followers after his own name. Since there was no other organised religion/ sect, they did not face any challenge from them, though they did have some people (called *Rakshas* in the later period) who opposed their thinking and lifestyle. But as time progressed, and the new challenges arose in the form of conversion and sectarian violence. Hindus rose to the occasion and wrote extensively on the issue. Swami Dayananda, for example, in his *Satyartha Prakash (The Light for Truth)* refers to both Christianity and Islam and tries to

establish the superiority of the Vedic Religion over them. In 1923, Swami Shraddhanand (1856-1926) of Arya Samaj piloted a historic response to Islam's legacy of proselytizing, calling it *Shuddhi* (literally purification).

Hindu Dharma and Other Creeds: Characteristics

"Religion" is not an appropriate translation for the term "Dharma"⁸. While the following nine are the characteristics of *dharma* according to *Yājñavalkya Smṛiti*⁹ : *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *satyam* (truth), *asteya* (non-stealing), *shauch* (cleanliness), *indriya-nigraha* (controlling the senses), *danam* (charity), *damo* (restraint/ control), *daya* (kindness) and *shanti* (peace), the following are ten characteristics of *dharma* according to Manu¹⁰: *Dhṛti* (patience), *Kṣama* (forgiveness), *Dama* (self-control), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Shaoca* (cleanliness), *Indriyanigraha* (control over organs), *Dhī* (benevolent intellect), *Vidya* (spiritual knowledge), *Satyam* (benevolent truthfulness) and *Akrodha* (non-anger). In *Srimad Bhagavatam* (7.11.8-12)¹¹ the list enumerates thirty characteristics which are a comprehensive way of engaging with existence. Each of these characteristics in these lists is meant for every human being, irrespective of their religious/sectarian moorings. For example, cleanliness should be followed by all of us and not simply by the adherent of a particular creed/ religion; each one of us should speak the truth and the like. If this definition of Dharma is accepted, the question of conversion becomes irrelevant. However, these definitions of Dharma are in sharp contrast to the definition of Judaism/ Christianity/ Islam, the followers of which are known as Jew/ Christian or Moslem. These three religions were started by three different prophets. Christianity and Islam are described as proselytizing religions as they believe in the need of conversion for salvation, though Judaism also allows conversion in a very limited way¹².

To understand the issue of religious conversion, let us first look at definitions of the religions involved in the process from three perspectives viz. academic, legal and religious in the following table 2:

Table 2

Name	Academic	Legal	Religious
Christian	An adherent of Christianity, the world's largest monotheistic religion, based on the life, teachings, and death of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the New Testament. It focuses on the historical spread, cultural impact, and diverse denominations.	Primarily defined as one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Legal systems typically use a generic, faith-based definition, often to determine the applicability of ecclesiastical law (historically) or for demographic statistics.	A person who professes belief in the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and accepts Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour (Messiah). Central to this is the belief in Jesus's death (Crucifixion) and bodily return to life (Resurrection).

Comments	Focuses on the religion's historical founder, its textual basis, and its status as a major global faith tradition.	Lacks complex ancestry or birth-based criteria in secular law, relying mainly on self-identification and profession of faith.	Definition is purely creedal and proselytic; identity is based entirely on personal faith in Jesus Christ, regardless of ancestry or ethnicity.
Jew	A member of the Jewish people, an ethnoreligious group descended from the ancient Israelites of Israel and Judah. It's often defined as a conglomerate of religious practice, ethnic descent, and cultural identity.	According to the Law of Return (1950): A person born to a Jewish mother or who has converted to Judaism (of any denomination) and is not a member of another religion. This legal definition grants the right to immigrate to Israel and receive citizenship.	According to Halakha (traditional Jewish law, followed by Orthodox and Conservative Judaism): A person born to a Jewish mother or a person who has undergone a rigorous halakhic conversion. Status is retained even if the person ceases to practice or converts to another religion.
Comments	Acknowledges the ethnic dimension alongside the religious one. Notes that modern streams (like Reform Judaism) may accept patrilineal descent if the child is raised with a Jewish identity.	This definition is explicitly linked to national identity and immigration rights, serving a political function for the State of Israel.	Identity is primarily determined by matrilineal descent or conversion, making it a distinct ethnoreligious group, where ethnicity and religion are intrinsically linked.
Hindu	A person who adheres to Hinduism, often seen as an ethno-geographical group originating in the Indian subcontinent. Academics note the term is an exonym (derived from the Indus	As per the Indian Constitution and codified Hindu laws (like the Hindu Marriage Act), a Hindu is: 1) A Hindu by religion in any of its forms (including Virashaiva, Lingayat, Brahmo, Arya Samaj), OR	A follower of Sanatana Dharma (the eternal way). They adhere to Hinduism, a diverse tradition characterized by the doctrines of <i>Karma</i> (action), <i>Punarjanm</i> (rebirth), and <i>Moksha</i> (liberation), and

	River/Sindhu) that was later used as an umbrella term for indigenous Indian traditions.	2) A person who is a Buddhist, Jain, or Sikh by religion, OR 3) Any person domiciled in India who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi, or Jew by religion.	who accept the authority of the Vedas (though adherence to any specific tenet varies widely).
Comments	Emphasizes the historical, cultural, and geographical origins of the term <i>Hindu</i> rather than theological adherence.	The Indian Constitution does not directly define the term; the above is the most expansive definition, including several separate religions for the purpose of applying secular law, thus equating the term with an entire legal-geographical group. The Supreme Court of India considers Hinduism to be a way of life and not a religion in conventional sense. Hindus largely describe themselves as the followers of <i>Sanatan Dharma</i> .	Lacks a single founder, prophet, or required creed. It is highly pluralistic and focuses on orthopraxy ("correct action") rather than strict orthodoxy ("correct belief").
Muslim	An adherent of Islam, an Abrahamic monotheistic religion centred on the <i>Qur'an</i> (the verbatim word of God) and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The term emphasizes the concept of submission (<i>Islam</i>) to God.	<i>The Constitution of Pakistan</i> (260.3.a/b) defines a (Non-) Muslim as: "260.3.a) "Muslim" means a person who believes in the unity and oneness of Almighty Allah, in the absolute and unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), the last of the prophets, and does not	A person who adheres to Islam, which means "submission to God." A Muslim is "one who submits." To become a Muslim, one must sincerely utter the <i>Shahada</i> (declaration of faith): "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of God."

		believe in, or recognize as a prophet or religious reformer, any person who claimed or claims to be a prophet, in any sense of the word or of any description whatsoever, after Muhammad (peace be upon him); and b) “non-Muslim” means a person who is not a Muslim and includes a person belonging to the Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist or Parsi community, a person of the Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves ‘Ahmadis’ or by any other name), or a Bahai, and a person belonging to any of the scheduled castes.]” (<i>The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan</i> , [As Modified Upto The 7th January, 2015], National Assembly of Pakistan.)	
Comments	Focuses on the religion’s Abrahamic tradition, its central text (<i>Qur’an</i>), and the linguistic meaning of the term (submitting).	Definition in law is usually straightforwardly creedal, though issues of conversion and parentage are sometimes addressed differently across various legal schools or jurisdictions (<i>Shariat</i> laws).	Identity is purely volitional and creedal. It is based on a specific, clear declaration of faith (Shahada) and requires accepting Muhammad as the final prophet.

It is clear from the above that Christianity and Islam are primarily defined by a creed (a statement of belief) and conversion (e.g., *Shahada* or baptism/profession of faith). They are universally proselytizing faiths, meaning anyone, regardless of ancestry, can become a member. Judaism is unique as an ethnoreligious group. Identity is primarily determined by birth (matrilineal descent), making it difficult — though not impossible — to join through conversion.

Hinduism (*Sanatana Dharma*) defies all the narrow traditional features of any religion or creed. Haldane, therefore, writes: "Hinduism is not a religion [in the sense] this term is understood by the adherents of proselytizing religions."¹³ It has been accepted as the oldest surviving religion in the world, which unlike Abrahamic faith systems, has multiple books, prophets (*avatar*), gods, prayers and prayer rituals, rites or performances, images (*vigraha*) for worship and reverence, philosophical concepts, paths to liberation (*Moksha*) and the like. The faith has survived in the Indian subcontinent despite several waves of insults, deprivations, threats, torments, oppressions and slaughters both by the internal and foreign aggressions in its history of several thousand years. The process has not stopped till date.

In view of Max Müller, Hinduism is a practice of Henotheism. "Müller stated that henotheism means 'monotheism in principle and polytheism in fact.' He made the term a centre of his criticism of Western theological and religious exceptionalism (relative to Eastern religions), focusing on a cultural dogma which held 'monotheism' to be both fundamentally well-defined and inherently superior to differing conceptions of God."¹⁴ Sometimes, Hinduism is defined by adherence to a philosophical/ethical way of life (orthopraxy) and association with the traditions of the Indian subcontinent, not a single creed or prophet. Griswold¹⁵ has pointed the following six characteristics of a Hindu:

1. "Hinduism has always had the general animistic or pantheistic tendency to deify whatever is.
2. A second general characteristic of Hinduism is the tendency to syncretism.
3. A third characteristic of Hinduism is the contrast which it accepts and justifies between "hieratic" and "popular" religion.
4. A fourth characteristic of Hinduism is the dominance of the religious point of view in all the affairs of life, or the supremacy of the religious consciousness.
5. A fifth characteristic of Hinduism is great reverence for the ideal of renunciation and great capacity for sacrifice.
6. A sixth and last characteristic of Hinduism to be mentioned is the existence in it of aspirations and anticipations still largely unfulfilled and unsatisfied." (Griswold).

The Supreme Court of India has repeatedly observed: "When we think of the Hindu religion, we find it difficult, if not impossible, to define Hindu religion or even adequately describe it. ... It may broadly be described as a way of life and nothing more." (1966 AIR 1119, 1976 (Sup) SCR 478, 1995 AIR 2089, 1996 AIR 1113) However, the former Vice President of India, Mohammad

Hamid Ansari, has questioned this observation by rhetorically asking: "Which religion is not a way of life? Is Judaism not a way of life? Is Islam not a way of life? Is Christianity not a way of life? Is Buddhism not a way of life?"¹⁶ In the same interview, he further says, "After all, Judges are very eminent people, but they are not infallible."¹⁷ David Frawley, too, disagrees with the opinion of the Supreme Court and maintains that to describe Hinduism as "a way of life"¹⁸ is not only fallacious but also demeaning. He describes it as a way to live in harmony with the entire cosmos; it is a name of a behaviour and a *Sâdhanâ*; it is the quest of the self and not some external faith.¹⁹ (Frawley) Likewise, Maria Wirth writes: "Hinduism is an ideal way of life which is helpful in realising one's ONENESS with the Supreme Being. This ideal way of life is not based on a dogmatic belief system, but on experiential wisdom."²⁰ (Wirth) Haldane calls Hinduism an attitude (see supra). Vidyaniwas Mishra puts it differently when he says: "Hindu dharma propels one to live in the present; it is a union of truth and cosmic order/ divine law (*rita*)."²¹ (Mishra 11) What these three scholars are saying is that Hinduism explores the relationship between *Vyashti* (the particularised thing, अपरा प्रकृति) and *Samashti* (the generalised and the abstract universal whole, परा प्रकृति).

The best description of a Hindu way of life is: "a constant engagement to shed one's ignorance and pettiness"²² (*Sabdakalpadruma* 537). What binds various denominations (like Shaivism, Shaktism, Smartism Vaishnavism, Saurism and others) of the Hindus and different sects of Indian origin (like Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Arya Samaj, Mahima Dharma, Prarthana Samaj and others) together is the acceptance and belief in the following three doctrines: the doctrines of i) action (*karma*) ii) rebirth (*punarjanm*) and iii) liberation (*moksha*). These are also the necessary and sufficient conditions to identify or to describe somebody as a Hindu.

There are three parameters to decide the worthiness of an act (*Karma*). The first one has been suggested by Gandhi very succinctly as: "a relentless pursuit after truth" (*Young India*, 24-4-1924)²³. It is necessitated for "the face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid" (*Ishavasya Upanishad* 15)²⁴. The quest of true knowledge is the major subject of the Upanishads. Truth is one of the five yamas in the *Yoga Sutra* (2.30-31)²⁵. *Taittiriya Upanishad* exhorts one to speak the *Satya* (truth)²⁶. *Mundaka Upanishad* (3.1.6)²⁷ states: *satyamevam jayate* (Truth alone triumphs). Secondly, the Hindus believe that every human being is indebted to five sources for his/her existence and survival. Therefore, through his/her actions, a person should strive to repay the five ethical and spiritual debts²⁸ (*Shatpath Brahmana*: 1.7.2.1-6) in one's lifetime. So, each action of a Hindu should be directed towards an effort to repay at least one of the following five debts: indebtedness to the sages (*rishi rin ऋषि ऋण*), indebtedness to the ancestors (*pitra rin पितृ ऋण*), indebtedness to the deities (*deva rin देव ऋण*) and indebtedness to humanity (*manushya rin मनुष्य ऋण*) and indebtedness to the objects of nature like plants and animals (*bhuta rin भूत ऋण*). The third parameter to judge the value and validity of an action is that it should be performed for the fulfilment of at least one of the four proper goals/aims of life (*purushartha पुरुषार्थ*): righteousness/ moral values (*Dharma धर्म*)²⁹, prosperity/ economic values (*Artha अर्थ*), passion/ love/ psychological values (*Kama*

कर्म) and happiness/ spiritual value (*Moksha मोक्ष*). All these four values are independent as well as interdependent.

Other characteristics like (non)acceptance of the all-pervasive Supreme Being who is both immanent and transcendent, (non)acceptance of the Vedas as a *Pramana* (means of valid authority) in religious and philosophic matters, (non) allegiance to a particular tenet or philosophic concept, (non)practice of multifarious rituals, (non) acceptance of great world rhythm, vast period of creation, maintenance and dissolution that follow each other in endless succession (four *Yugas* viz. *Satyuga*, *Treta*, *Dwapar* and *Kaliyuga* followed by *Pralya*) are just the examples of different stages of realization by different sages and spiritual leaders in their quest of truth. Even the evolution of the *Chaturashrama*³⁰ (four-age-based Monastery System) and the *Chaturvarna*³¹ (four order/ class system) is to put the principle of Karma in its proper place effectively. Similarly, different kinds of rituals, surrender to God, sticking to *chaturashrama* and *chaturvarna*, *japa* (prayers) to different deities, and having qualities like contentment (*santosh*), tolerance, annihilation of ego, love of life, flexibility, humility, austerity, charity, rationalism etc are just different types of karmas for different occasions and purposes in consonance with the parameters specified above. From this exploration, one realizes that nothing is to be wasted, rather everything is to be utilised in an optimum manner. From this emerges the tangential characteristic of Hinduism: it is a way of living with responsibility and duty, not with authority and rights. It may be reiterated that one's responsibility and duty are not confined to only the human world but include all the objects in the cosmos. Similarly, the authority and rights of human beings neither override nor interfere with the rights of other objects in the cosmos.

However, Christians³² consider Hindus to be heathens and Moslems consider them to be infidels (kafirs)³³; both Christians and Moslems³⁴ believe that Hindus shall be burning in the fire of Hell because of their faith. Therefore, both groups, perhaps out of compassion or because of divine proclamation³⁵, make efforts to convert Hindus to their fold. The church "deceives, threatens, and lures people away from their tolerant, inclusive tradition into an arrogant, divisive mindset. Some followers of Islam ... kill [the nonbelievers]."³⁶ Both these groups have therefore turned "arrogant, self-righteous and [are fully] convinced that they are meant to rule the world in the name of their god."³⁷ (Wirth) They leave no opportunity to demean the Hindus. Here is one example of a Christian arrogant opinion: "It is difficult to estimate Hinduism's contribution to the world. ... But perhaps, when all is said, Hinduism's greatest contribution to the religious progress of humanity will prove to be a negative one."³⁸

Background to Conversion: Interfaith Relations

Sarah Lee³⁹ proposes a relationship where Proselytizing is determined by dividing the zeal for sharing faith by the respect for other faiths:

$$\text{Proselytizing} = \frac{\text{zeal of sharing faith}}{\text{respect for other faiths}}$$

Demographically speaking, Globally, Christianity remains the largest religion with ~2.4 billion adherents, followed by Islam with ~1.9 billion, then Hinduism (approximately 1.16 billion adherents in 2024) and Buddhism (around 520 million followers globally in 2024). Hindus are located largely in India and Nepal, while 120 of the world's countries and territories had a majority Christian population and Muslims are the majority in 49 countries. In 2020, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) consisted of 57 member states, most of which have officially declared themselves to be Islamic. The collective population of OIC member states is estimated to be over 2.04 billion as of 2025.

We know of some Interfaith dialogues in the recorded history across the world. Swami Vivekananda also participated in one such meeting in Chicago in September 1893. I doubt if such interactions are purely academic or humanitarian exercises. In these events the religious heads try to show respect to each other besides trying to showcase the benevolent aspects of their faith. But there are some other facts too which are generally pushed under the carpet in such gatherings. In this section, I'll touch upon a few of them.

In a lecture at Westminster Abbey in 1873, Max Müller classified religions that actively seek new followers (missionary religions) and those that do not (non-missionary religions)⁴⁰. Müller writes: "Among the six religions of the Aryan and Semitic world, there are three that are opposed to all Missionary enterprise — Judaism, Brahmanism, and Zoroastrianism; and three that have a Missionary character from their very beginning — Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity." (Müller 35) Bracketing Buddhism with Abrahamic faiths is mischievous for there are fundamental differences in the two. While Abrahamic religions present themselves as the sole path to salvation, Buddhist conversion is an individual, personal journey to understand and practice the Dhamma, which is presented as a path to liberation from suffering rather than a path to eternal life in the Abrahamic sense. Abrahamic faiths emphasise on proselytization and the believe that salvation is exclusive to their followers, whereas Buddhism focuses on individual spiritual development through its teachings and does not wish to create followers ("*appo deepo bhava*", meaning, "be your own light").

With around ~2.4 billion followers globally, Christianity is the largest practised religion (Christianity was a minority religion during much of the middle Roman Classical Period, and the early Christians were persecuted during that time), followed by Islam with ~1.9 billion (After the Arab conquests, Christian Arab tribes were forced to convert to Islam. Non-Muslims ("*Kafir*" a derivative from "*Kuffar*" or "non-believers," or "infidels") were required to pay the *jizya*, be exiled, or be killed, depending on which of the four main schools of Islamic law their conqueror followed.),

then Hinduism (approximately 1.16 billion adherents in 2024) and Buddhism (around 520 million followers globally in 2024). Hindus are located largely in India and Nepal, while 120 of the world's countries and territories had a majority Christian population and Muslims are the majority in 49 countries. The correlation between the ancestry of faiths and the number of followers today does not present a picture of harmony among the faiths. Logically speaking, all the new faiths have carved out a territory for themselves from the preceding faiths.

European history is replete with the history of Holy Wars (Religious Wars). Historical and ongoing conflicts with religious dimensions include the Crusades, and the French Wars of Religion, the Thirty Years' War, which were fought between different Christian factions. In 1492, the Alhambra Decree ordered the expulsion of all Jews from Spain, forcing them to either convert to Catholicism or leave the country. Following the fall of Granada in 1492, Spanish Muslims (Moriscos) were forcibly converted to Catholicism in the early 16th century. Later, between 1609 and 1614, they were expelled from Spain entirely. Those who remained and secretly practiced their religion faced severe persecution, including torture and execution, by the Spanish Inquisition. The Peace of Augsburg (1555) established the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* ("whose realm, his religion") within the Holy Roman Empire. This meant a region's prince or ruler could choose the religion of his territory (either Catholicism or Lutheranism), and subjects had to either adopt that religion or relocate. This principle resulted in widespread persecution, forced conversions, and mass migrations of religious minorities across Europe. The Cromwellian conquest of Ireland in the mid-17th century involved the confiscation of Catholic-owned estates, which were then given to loyal Protestants. France's Protestant minority, the Huguenots, faced intense persecution, culminating in the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. This act forced many to convert or flee the country, with hundreds of thousands seeking refuge in other parts of Europe and America.

Contemporary conflicts with significant religious elements include the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Syrian Civil War, India-Pakistan conflicts, Muslim Rohingya-Buddhist conflicts in Myanmar, and the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, though these also involve complex political and ethnic factors. The persecution of the Hindu minority in a Moplah-Muslim-dominated Malabar region of Kerala in 1921, too, has drawn attention of some scholars. In recent Indian history (mid-1980s - 1991), Kashmir is a burning example, where a systematic, forced campaign of terror and violence against the Hindu minority (Kashmiri Pandits), was undertaken by Islamist terrorists/ organisations with the aim of purging the valley of its non-Muslim population. Threatening slogans from mosque loudspeakers telling Pandits to "convert, leave, or perish" (Kashmiri phrase: *Raliv, Tsaliv or Galiv and Chaliv*), targeted killings of prominent community members, and the destruction of properties and religious sites was undertaken on a large scale. These slogans were not new as they had been raised in Europe too, when the Muslims in Ottoman Empire stormed Europe. The invariability in slogans indicates to the consistency in the behaviour of the terror perpetrating community.

The militant groups like the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and later the Hizbul Mujahideen started a reign of terror in the Kashmir Valley. Since the Pandits or their sympathisers were the targets, a large portion of the Kashmiri Pandit population fled the Valley, primarily between January and March 1990. The case of Girija Tickoo may be mentioned to indicate the brutalities faced by the minority Hindus. Girija's is a rare case of ethnic cleansing and targeted killings where the minority community was systematically driven out of the region by violence and threats, creating a demographic shift. Ms Tickoo worked as a laboratory assistant at a school in Bandipora. Following the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, her family had moved to Jammu for safety. In June 1990, she was lured to return to the valley to collect her pending salary after being assured by a colleague that it was safe to do so but the terrorists kidnapped her from her colleague's home. After being gang-raped and tortured, she was taken to a sawmill and cut in two with a mechanical saw while still alive. Her body was later found on the roadside. Estimates of the number of Pandits who fled vary, ranging from approximately 90,000–170,000 to figures as high as 350,000–500,000 cited by some Kashmiri Pandit organizations. They are mostly settled in refugee camps in Jammu and Delhi. However, the Marxist sociologists and historians tried to sidetrack the main religious issue by putting the blame on unemployment and unequal distribution of land.

Contrary to this situation, in the Hindu dominated areas in India, minorities stay safe and no major communal violence has been reported but it cannot be said of the areas where Hindus are in minority. There are also sporadic reports and claims of pressure, intimidation, and violence against Hindus in certain Muslim-majority pockets of states like West Bengal and Assam. The decimation of Hindus in Pakistan (from approximately 20.5% in 1947, to about 1.6% in 2023) is another example of sustained legal and social discrimination ever since the creation of Pakistan⁴¹. The violence against Hindus since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in August 2024 in Bangladesh is another example highlighting the severe vulnerability of Hindu minorities when Islamic militant or fundamentalist elements gain dominance⁴².

Interfaith Relations: Christian Suppression of Hindus

Manthra, Kakeyi's helpmate in Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* (2.15.3), says: "Let anyone be the king, how does it harm me? I, a maidservant is not going to be pronounced a queen."⁴³ Many Indians think like Manthara. But the histories of different nations teach us differently as the regimes do affect the lives of even the ordinary. For example, lakhs of Jews were made to run from their places because of the rulers; nearly six million Jews were persecuted in Germany because of the "Leader and Chancellor of the Reich." Similarly, lakhs of Hindus/ Muslims had to leave their motherland and shift to unknown places to save themselves during partition. When Goa came under Portuguese rule, Archbishop of Goa passed over 115 decrees to humiliate Hindus. Mass conversions of Hindus took place during mid sixteenth century; the neo-converts could not even use their Konkani Hindu names; inquisition was instituted to punish all those (including non-Christians) who violated Christian dictums. How the life of the locals was affected

due to these rules has been documented by various historians⁴⁴. Teotonio R. De Souza has mentioned the following effects of the new regime:

- All qadis were ordered out of Portuguese territory in 1567.
- Non-Christians were forbidden from occupying any public office, and only a Christian could hold such an office;
- Hindus were forbidden from producing any Christian devotional objects or symbols;
- Hindu children whose father had died were required to be handed over to the Jesuits for conversion to Christianity;
- Hindu women who converted to Christianity could inherit all of the property of their parents;
- Hindu clerks in all village councils were replaced with Christians;
- Christian ganvkars (freeholders) could make village decisions without any Hindu ganvkars present, however Hindu ganvkars could not make any village decisions unless all Christian ganvkars were present; in Goan villages with Christian majorities, Hindus were forbidden from attending village assemblies.
- Christian members were to sign first on any proceedings, Hindus later;
- In legal proceedings, Hindus were unacceptable as witnesses, only statements from Christian witnesses were admissible.
- Hindu temples were demolished in Portuguese Goa, and Hindus were forbidden from building new temples or repairing old ones. A temple demolition squad of Jesuits was formed which actively demolished pre-16th century temples, with a 1569 royal letter recording that all Hindu temples in Portuguese colonies in India have been demolished and burnt down (*desfeitos e queimados*);
- Hindu priests were forbidden from entering Portuguese Goa to officiate Hindu weddings.
- A restriction was put on the week-long celebration of Hindu weddings.
- All Hindus were forced to learn Christian doctrine by Jesuits.
- Various treaties were not respected.
- Even the native Christian converts (including clergy) were discriminated against by the white-skinned Portuguese.

Muslim Invasions: Jihad

Primary sources detail several instances of state-sanctioned destruction and religious conversion during the medieval period. For example, Hasan Nizami, the contemporary chronicler and author of the *Taj-ul-Ma'asir*, asserts that Qutb-ud-din Aibak (1150-1210 CE) directed the demolition of twenty-seven Hindu and Jain temples within the citadel of Qila-i-Rai Pithaura. The resulting architectural spolia were utilized in the construction of the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, the first congregational mosque established in Delhi. Similarly, in Ajmer (1192), he ordered the destruction of several local temples, repurposing their carved pillars to facilitate the rapid construction of the *Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra* mosque. Historical narratives surrounding the 1194

capture of Koil (Aligarh) assert that Aibak “purified” the region by removing religious icons and executing those who resisted conversion to Islam. During his offensive against the Gahadavala dynasty in Varanasi (Benares) in 1194, chroniclers claim, Aibak’s forces destroyed approximately one thousand temples in the sacred city, subsequently erecting mosques upon their foundations. Aibak’s 1197 assault on the Chaulukya capital of Anhilwara resulted in an estimated 50,000 casualties and the enslavement of a further 20,000 people. Finally, upon the capitulation of the strategic fortress of Kalinjar in 1202, Aibak’s most thoroughly documented military operations, temples were forcibly converted into mosques and an estimated 50,000 residents were either executed or subjected to enslavement. Contemporary chroniclers claim that the presence of “idolatry” was effectively eradicated. This in effect means that Hindus were slaughtered, converted or were made to flee. During the reign of Shams ud-Din Iltutmish, Gwalior (near Delhi) was attacked (1232 CE). The Rajput women committed *jauhar* (mass self-immolation), and many of the remaining inhabitants were killed. In his memoirs, known as the *Malfuzat-i-Timuri* (or *Tuzk-i-Timuri*), Timur (Tamerlane) records that 100,000 prisoners were executed even before the final assault to prevent a revolt during 1398-1399. The general massacre (Qatal-e-am) ordered by Nadir Shah from the Sunehri Masjid of Roshan-ud-Daulah (Delhi) on the morning of March 22, 1739, is reported in several contemporary chronicles like Rustam Ali’s *Tarikh-e-Hind*, Abdul Karim’s *Bayan-e-Waqai* and Anand Ram Mukhlis’ *Tazkira* (also known as *Tazkira-e-Anand Ram Mukhlis*). AND Haksar, on the basis of *Tazkira*, writes, “Soon the pathways of areas like Chandni Chowk and Dariba Kalan, Fatehpuri and Faiz Bazar, Lahori, Ajmeri and Kabuli gates, Hauz Kazi and Johri Bazar — densely populated by Hindus and Muslims alike — were littered with bodies. Shops were looted and nobles’ mansions set ablaze. Women were ravished and abducted, many committing suicide. Even Muslim citizens were reported as resorting to *jauhar*, killing their own women and children. ... For a long time, streets remained strewn with corpses, as the walks of a garden with dead leaves and flowers. The town was reduced to ashes.”⁴⁵ Leftist scholars consider events such as these as merely a conflict between the rulers but the religious angle cannot be ignored.

From Economic Interdependence to Exclusivity: Halal Marketing Model

There is no denying the fact that in their day-to-day lives, Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities are interdependent in India and perhaps they cannot survive without each other. For example, Christian schools and hospitals are very popular among Hindus and in this way are patronised by Hindus. Most of the items needed for Puja (e.g. Kalava, chunri, incense sticks, bangles, wood-pieces, decorative pieces, drums, flags etc) in a Hindu festival are prepared in Muslim households. And in this way, Hindus help them run their households. But it is also true that of late, the entire fruit vending business has not only been taken over but is also largely controlled by Muslims across India and Hindus have suddenly been marginalised in this market. Similarly, the entire meat and fish market, and scrap market are in the control of Muslims. I am not aware if this is the outcome of some agency’s intervention or is just an outcome of some natural social-

shift. But, there is certainly a case of religious intervention in the form of “halal⁴⁶ module” of business.

Islamic nations wish to have economic relations largely with the Islamic countries. Most of them have weekly holidays on Friday, while others have it on Sundays (following Christian calendar and traditions). Hindus being a minority have adopted Christian calendar for their administrative and business purposes as a legacy from their British colonial masters. On the other hand, Pakistan and Bangladesh, though, ruled by the British, have switched over to Muslim practices to assert their religious identity. The OIC countries require a Halal certificate from other countries in accordance with Sharia Law for doing business with them. The range of areas where Halal certificates are being issued by an India based company is mind-boggling: Traders and Merchants, FMCG Manufacturers, Medical Tourism, Air Catering, Tourism, Logistics, Food items, and Cosmetics. The following information on the company’s blog throws light on the importance of halal:

Islamic branding is an idea whose time has come, as brands tracking a broader consumer base get accustomed to Muslim sensibilities. It’s not just about halal food alone, for it’s at the forefront of the branding repertoire that resonates deeply with Muslim consumers around the globe.

Homegrown brands like CavinKare, Daawat, Bikano, Goldwinner oil, Vadilal ice cream, Amrutanjan Health Care and Gujarat Ambuja Exports are embracing halal-certification to get a better foothold in markets like Singapore, Malaysia and Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries.

CavinKare has got a halal certification from Halal India, an apex body for halal certification, for three of its products – Fairever, Nyle herbal shampoo and Ruchi pickle – to expand its footprint in Singapore, Malaysia and GCC.⁴⁷ (<https://halalindia.co.in/2023/02/26/indian-brands-get-halal-stamp/>)

The Halal certified products are being promoted and sold within India too. This includes meat from (lawful in terms of Sharia) animals that have been slaughtered according to the specific ritual method (e.g. the animal being slaughtered should face in Kabba’s direction), known as *dhabiha* (or *zabiha*)⁴⁸, which involves recitation of some Koranic verses (a prayer at the time of the cut) by a sane, adult Muslim and a swift cut to the throat and the complete draining of blood by a sane, adult Muslim. It is believed that the market share of halal certified is increasing every day. The questions being asked by Hindus is if in a secular country, an economic activity can be used to ostracise another community and Why halal certification shouldn’t be viewed as “economic jihad” or a “parallel economy” controlled by Muslims. It is conjectured that this market-strategy leads to gross economic discrimination, fundamentalism and anti-national mindset. The Govt of UP, in November 2023, initiated a crackdown on halal-certified products, leading to a state-wide ban on their production, storage, distribution, and sale, with the exception of products intended for

export. The UP government stated that halal certification is an “unfair marketing strategy” that could create social discord and that the practice is not mentioned in the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

By introducing “Halal marketing,” the Muslim community has tried to reserve all types of production and marketing to one community alone. It is clear that Halal-Marketing directly violates fundamental rights like right to equality, right to equal opportunity and right against religious discrimination as guaranteed by the Constitution of India. “We endeavour to ensure that halal consumers and service providers derive benefits from that which is lawful and governance to Shariah (law),”⁴⁹ announces a company whose certificates are valid in 120 countries.⁵⁰ The number itself is indicative of the power and extent of a syndicate based on Muslim beliefs. Even a Sanatani businessman like Baba Ram Dev (Patanjali Brand) has taken Halal Certificate from Jamait Ulama-i-Hind Halal Trust for at least 54 of his products.⁵¹ Companies such as Haldiram, Dabur, ITC etc are no exception. I as a Hindu, sometimes wonder how Baba Ramdev is preparing his products while reciting verses from Koran and keeping his face towards Mecca. At some places even temple prasad is sold by some agencies as halal product⁵². The Halal Certification process mentioned by one agency that issues certificates is shown in Figure 1.

Land and Property Issues: Land Jihad

Historically speaking Muslims ruled largely Hindu populated India for almost 500 years but in a modern-day democratic set-up they feel marginalised (though they were given their share of land in the form of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan at the time of freedom in 1947). Muslims in India are not a marginalised community rather they are a privileged minority who wield a considerable social, economic and political power which is very clear from the following: They, through Waqf are the third-largest landholders⁵³ in India (as a collective entity) after the Armed Forces and Indian Railways. A 2011 report by the Shashvat Committee estimated the nationwide value of Waqf properties at Rs. 1.2 lakh crore. Land under the Waqf Board refers to immovable and movable property permanently dedicated for religious, pious, or charitable purposes under Muslim law, which is overseen and regulated by state and central Waqf councils in India. Waqf properties constitute a significant land bank in India. The Waqf Act of 1995 recognized that long-term use of land for Muslim religious or charitable purposes could automatically create a Waqf, which made it possible for claims to be made based on historical use. Section 40 of the 1995 Act allowed Waqf Boards to unilaterally declare any property as Waqf property, which could lead to disputes and was considered a cause for concern. Disputes over property claims were handled through Waqf Tribunals, judicial bodies consisting of Muslims alone, that would make the final decision; which could not be challenged anywhere.

The day-today examples of trying to control land property through Waqf are in plenty. In 2022, the Waqf Board wrote a 20-page letter to 12 registration offices in Trichy, claiming property in numerous districts including village Thiruchenthurai, in Tiruchirapalli district (Tamil Nadu). It

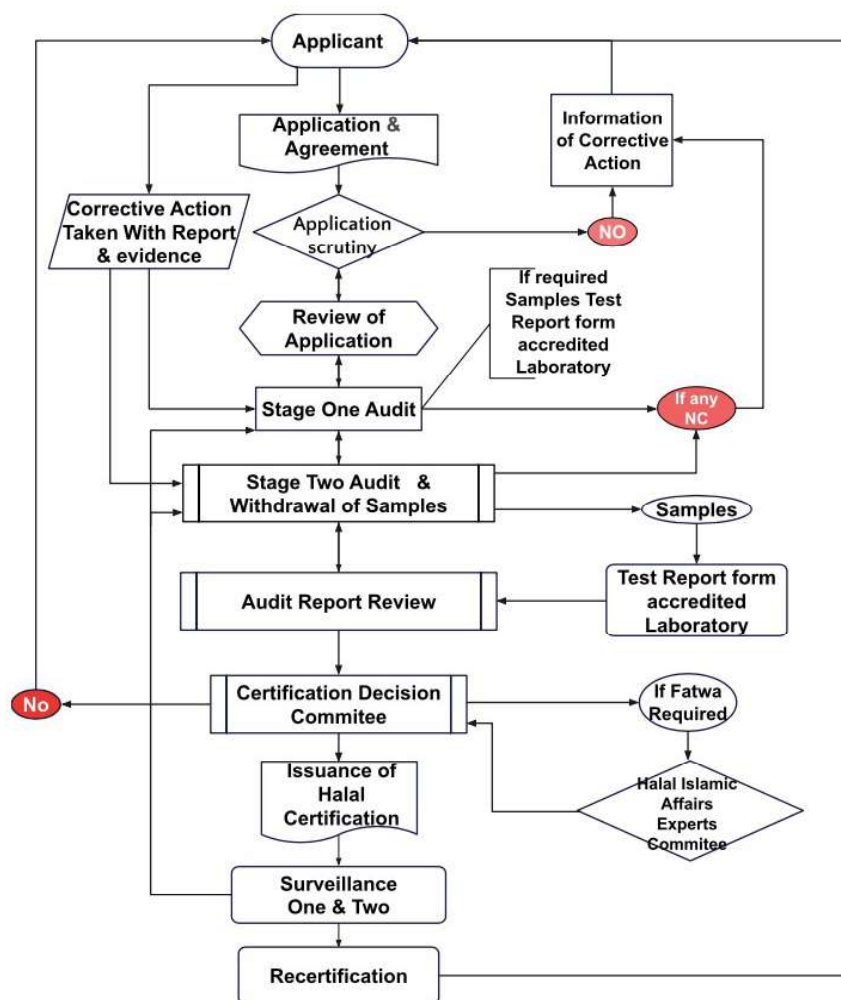


FIG. 1: HALAL CERTIFICATION PROCESS

also has a 1,500-year-old Sundareswarar Temple. The locals were taken aback when they came to know that their whole hamlet had been declared the property of the state Waqf board. The villagers claim that there was no evidence regarding Muslims residing in the area, and papers proved that resettlement took place in 1927-1928. Similarly, In August 2024, the Bihar Sunni Waqf Board claimed ownership of the entire village of Govindpur (Fatuha block, Patna district, Bihar), leading to legal disputes with residents. The villagers challenged this claim in the Patna High Court, which granted them interim relief, and the case is ongoing. The majority Hindus termed Waqf's actions as "Land Jihad"⁵⁴ and a soft form of "Ghazwa-e-Hind"⁵⁵.

In the village "Kalathur," Perambalur District (Tamil Nadu) Hindus and Muslims lived with no issues till 2011. In 2012, a demand was kept by Muslims not to allow temple procession in certain streets where Muslims live. The then ADMK Government relented though the was rejected several times until 2018 and the Police Department and other officials issued certain restrictions for festival processions of the Hindu Temples. Since there was an objection by the Muslim community people about the sprinkling of turmeric water (an important ritual for the procession), it was directed that the Hindus shall not sprinkle turmeric water on the third day and they would restrict their celebrations and rituals on the third day. The issue started in 2012 and restrictions were put in place by a Court order in 2018 which was overturned in April 2021 by Madras High court order. During the protest against the transfer of a municipal secretary in Malappuram (a Muslim dominated town), a speech by IUML leader Abid Hussain Thangal, in late 2021, demanded that the position of municipal secretary in Malappuram should be held by a Muslim officer only. From these it is clear that Muslims do not trust any other community. They want majority rights wherever they are in majority and they need minority rights where ever they are in minority.

Let us ponder over the interfaith relations in a Muslim country too. We can take the example of a Constitutional democracy like Pakistan as a case study. The relations between a Muslim and Non-Muslim can be studied from the *Constitution of Pakistan*. The Preamble in it declares: "Wherein the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, **as enunciated by Islam**, shall be fully observed." (emphasis added, p. 1). The Constitutional mandate is that all existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the Injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah, and no law repugnant to such Injunctions shall be enacted (Article 227). Federal Shariat Court (FSC) is empowered to examine and decide whether any law or provision of law is repugnant to the Injunctions of Islam. If the FSC declares a law to be un-Islamic, the government must take steps to amend the law. In a direct conflict, the established legal structure attempts to ensure that laws conform to Islamic injunctions through the FSC mechanism.

Only a Muslim can become the President or Prime Minister of Pakistan. Muslim girls cannot marry outside their religion in conformity with the Koranic injunctions. According to Quran 2:221 (*Surah Al-Baqarah*, <https://myislam.org/surah-baqarah/ayat-221/>), Muslim women are

forbidden from marrying non-Muslim men (polytheists/*mushrikin*) until they believe. The verse dictates that a believing slave is better than a free polytheist, citing that such marriages lead to the fire, while Allah invites to Paradise. This prohibition is a consensus among Islamic jurists. Non-Muslims have rights to religious freedom, including managing their institutions and practicing their faith (Article 20) but Anti-blasphemy laws also exist that restrict non-Muslims from spreading their beliefs. Ahmadi community cannot even describe themselves as Muslims or spread their beliefs. At the time of independence, Hindus were about 20.5% of the population in the regions that now form Pakistan; by the 1951 census, this had dropped to around 1.6%. In recent years, while estimates vary, the percentage has remained low, with recent data from the 2023 census indicating it is about 2.17%. According to a report published in *The New York Times*, 15 Oct 2020, some impoverished and desperate Pakistani Hindus are converting to Islam due to economic hardship, such as being offered jobs, land, or money by Muslim groups, while others are pressured into conversion through coercion. These economic incentives and forced conversions have contributed to the decline of the Hindu population in Pakistan.

The political clout of Muslims can be understood from their importance in any election. Because of their numerical strength and highly political inclination and participation, all political parties try to woo them though they generally vote for a Muslim candidate and try to stall a BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) candidate somehow, even though the candidate may be a Muslim. This is clear from the number of elected MLAs and MPs of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen party from the Muslim dominated areas and various newspaper reports and discussions. Samajwadi Party leader Maria Alam (the niece of Congress leader Salman Khurshid) called for 'Vote Jihad' at an election rally, urging attendees to boycott Muslim voters supporting BJP.⁵⁶ Their political influence and power can also be gauged from the bill, full of anti-majority bias, entitled "Prevention of Communal and Targeted Violence (Access to Justice and Reparations) Bill"⁵⁷, a proposed law in 2011 drafted by the National Advisory Council (NAC).

Indian Encounters with Christianity: A Bitter Pill

The encounter between Hinduism and Christianity largely commenced with the coming of Christian missionaries to Malabar after Vasco da Gama found his way to Calicut in AD 1498. It took a serious turn in AD 1542 when Francis Xavier arrived on the scene with the firm resolve of "uprooting paganism" from the soil of India and planting Christianity in its place. St. Xavier considered Brahmins "perverse ... wicked ... unholy ... crafty ... liars ... cheats ... deceive[rs] ... cunning"⁵⁸ for preserving what he saw as false religion by keeping up the worship of Hindu gods, rituals and rites, maintenance of temples and service to the *Vigrahas*. He believed that Brahmins were the primary obstacle to converting Hindus to Christianity in India. His letters indicate his great frustration that Brahmins' respected status within society limited his missionary success and stated that if not for the Brahmins, all Hindus would have been converted. Xavier's frustration led him to make exaggerated claims about his failures. He wrote to Rome lamenting his inability to convert Brahmins,

though he and other missionaries did succeed in converting some Goan Brahmins, who were then absorbed into the Roman Catholic Brahmin (*Bamonn*) caste. Frustrated by his inability to convert Brahmins, Xavier and other missionaries concentrated their efforts on lower castes and marginalized groups, believing they would be more receptive to conversion. Xavier advocated for Portuguese colonial authorities to implement anti-Hindu laws that would help enforce conversion. This led to state-sanctioned policies that fined and punished non-Catholics, banned Hindu priests from entering Goa, and systematically destroyed temples. Xavier's letters⁵⁹ to Portugal's King John III were instrumental in bringing in the institution of inquisition to Goa to ensure that newly converted Christians did not revert to their previous religious practices.

The Goa Inquisition targeted non-Christians and new converts suspected of secretly observing their old faith. Punishments for various offenses (including secretly practicing Hinduism, speaking the native Konkani language, or preventing others from converting to Catholicism) included confinement, imprisonment, flogging, and, in some severe cases, execution. Conversion was sometimes offered as a way to forgive lesser punishments. Portuguese inquisitors employed brutal physical tortures including strappado (hoisting victims by bound hands), thumb-screws, leg-crushers, boiling oil on legs, and whirling on tables until nausea to force confessions and conversions. Public autos-da-fé executions burned refusers alive, while children were kidnapped, forcibly baptized, and separated from families; owning Hindu idols warranted death penalties. Incentives like land, jobs, and money targeted vulnerable groups, alongside mutilations such as severing hands from resisting men. Many Brahmins resisted conversion, and large numbers migrated from Goa to escape the persecution during the Inquisition, preserving their cultural identity. Jesuit missionaries in Portuguese-controlled areas, such as Goa, engaged in mass baptisms and forcibly converted people. In one infamous method, they would smear beef on the lips of Hindus, rendering them "untouchable" and effectively forcing them to convert. Francis Xavier was among the original group of companions who founded the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits order) in 1540. He was a key figure in the order's early history, working closely with Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

St Paul in his verses on love⁶⁰ tells people how they are to be – kind, patient, gentle, slow to anger, not envious of others, protective, trusting and full of love and hope. Following St Paul (1 Corinthians - Chapter 13), Christians consider love to be a great virtue but the following oath of the Jesuits is full of hatred not only for the non-Christians but also for the Christians of other denominations:

THE JESUIT OATH: ... I do furthermore promise and declare that I will, when opportunity presents, make and wage relentless war, secretly or openly, against all heretics, Protestants and Liberals, as I am directed to; extirpate them from the face of the earth; and that I will spare neither age, sex or condition; and that I will hang, waste, boil, flay, strangle and bury alive these infamous heretics, rip up the stomachs and wombs of their women and crush

their infants' heads against the walls, in order to annihilate their inexecrable race. That when the same cannot be done openly, I will secretly use the poisonous cup, the strangulating cords, the steels of the poniard, or the leaden bullets, regardless of the honour, rank, dignity, or authority of the persons, whatever may be their condition in life, either public or private, as I at any time may be directed so to do by any agent of the Pope, or superior of the Holy Father of the Society of Jesus....⁶¹

In 2016 there were about 4000 Jesuits in India according to the *Oxford Handbook*. "Jesuits in India now run 118 primary and middle schools, 155 high schools, 50 university colleges, 22 technical institutes, and 15 business administration institutes with 11,225 teachers, educating 3, 24,538 students belonging to different religious, linguistic, and socioeconomic groups."⁶² Still, (largely ignorant) Hindus believe that modern education in Christian institutions is harmless and has no agenda as it helps them attain some kind of power. But Christians themselves are saying that Jesuit types should not be encouraged without understanding their agenda. We should take informed decisions while selecting schools and ideas that they spread through (un)known means.

That education is one tool to Christianise the students is also evident from T. B. Macaulay's personal letter (dated October 12, 1836) to his father, Zachary Macaulay, who "worked endlessly ... to Christianize and improve the world". (Wikipedia) Here is an extract from the letter:

Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully. We find it difficult, indeed at some places impossible, to provide instruction for all who want it. At the single town of Hoogley fourteen hundred boys are learning English. The effect of this education on the Hindoos is prodigious. *No Hindoo who has received an English education ever continues to be sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy. But many profess themselves pure Deists, and some embrace Christianity. The case with Mahometans is very different. The best-educated Mahometan often continues to be a Mahometan still. The reason is plain. The Hindoo religion is so extravagantly absurd that it is impossible to teach a boy astronomy, geography, natural history, without completely destroying the hold which that religion has on his mind. But the Mahometan religion belongs to a better family. It has very much in common with Christianity; and even where it is most absurd, it is reasonable when compared with Hindooism.* It is my firm belief that, if our plans of education are followed up, *there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence.* And this will be effected without any efforts to proselytise, without the smallest interference with religious liberty, merely by the natural operation of knowledge and reflection. *I heartily rejoice in this prospect...* (emphasis added).⁶³

Now let me turn my attention to the healthcare sector, another favourite field of the Christian missionaries. The relationship between Christian missions and the health sector in India has been a subject of scholarly analysis, historical documentation, and political controversy, particularly concerning the issue of proselytization. Documentary evidence suggests that the developing

healthcare infrastructure and services in certain pockets is a well-established strategy used by Christian missions for proselytization. John C.B. Webster's⁶⁴ analysis explains that while missionary healthcare served a humanitarian purpose, it combined these activities with efforts to convert patients by exposing them to Christian teachings when they received medical assistance. In their article, Chaman Shahzad Masih and Ghulam Shabbir⁶⁵ discuss the suspicion among medical missionaries and Indian religious leaders during the colonial period that missionary programmes used healthcare as a primary means of gaining converts. This highlights the awareness of and controversy over the proselytizing nature of the medical work at the time. Research on Christian missions in colonial India confirms that while medical services served a humanitarian purpose, they were also "combined... with efforts to convert patients by exposing them to Christian teachings when they received medical assistance." In his research essay Ines G. Županov⁶⁶ documents how Catholic missionaries (particularly Jesuits) in South Asia in the early modern period strategically employed medical help and spiritual healing as a core mechanism for achieving religious conversion. The establishment of healthcare institutions was designed as a showcase of Christian charity and love. The hospital was viewed explicitly as a strategic location — a "fishery of the souls" — where physical healing could lead directly to spiritual conversion. Assisting an individual patient was often tied to the hope that their entire community would subsequently convert. Missionaries reported that the selfless care provided during epidemics, like smallpox, was seen as unprecedented by the local population making it a powerful tool for edification and conversion. Every missionary or priest in Portuguese India was referred to as a "soul doctor" (*médico das almas*). The most dramatic and significant tool was the practice of exorcism. Missionaries systematically identified local possessing agents and supernatural entities (such as Bhadrakali, Murugal, *pey*, *yakku*) and conceptualized them as Christian demons, stripping them of any benevolent or divine qualities. The successful exorcism of these "demons" was staged as a clear victory of Christianity over "paganism," a ritual intervention designed to reframe cultural and social barriers. While health-seekers often accessed this care for purely physical or existential relief, viewing missionaries within a framework of medical pluralism, the missionaries' ultimate goal remained the reframing of local society through healing, a process that later involved the native Christian priesthood and led to a complex indigenization of spiritual healing practices. Thus, historical analysis of Jesuit missions undertaken by Županov confirms that medical care was viewed as an "auxiliary step in the process of 'curing the soul'" and that the ultimate goal was "conversion to Christianity." This documents the foundational theological intent behind medical missions. Similarly, a study⁶⁷ on a leprosy colony in Andhra Pradesh documented that the majority of settlers, who had been treated at a nearby mission hospital, converted to Christianity whilst in hospital. For many from the lower castes, conversion occurred post-leprosy during treatment, resulting in new Christian identities, including changes in names and cultural practices like eschewing certain Hindu symbols.

Two interviews⁶⁸ of Dr Johnrose Austin Jayalal, while he was President of Indian Medical Association of India, were published in *Haggai International*⁶⁹ and *Christianity Today*⁷⁰ respectively where he laid stress on connecting with Christian doctors and nurses and using secular spaces like hospitals and medical colleges to proselytize. Critics argue that it was an abuse of professional ethics for conversion purposes. Dr Jayalal, who is infamous for spewing hatred against Ayurveda, Sanskrit and Hinduness rather than giving valuable information as a medical specialist on dos and don'ts to tackle the Covid pandemic, was using the opportunity for evangelism. A criminal complaint was filed against him in response of which, Dwarka District Court in Delhi has issued summons to Dr Jayalal asking him to be present in the court on 31st May 2021.⁷¹ This legal action and the associated media reports provide a documented example of a contemporary figure explicitly linking the medical profession to evangelism. All this proves that material benefits like medicines and medical aids are being used for conversion which is an unlawful activity. The anti-conversion laws⁷² define "inducement" to include the "grant of any benefit, either pecuniary or otherwise," a category that includes offering free or subsidized healthcare a "pecuniary" or "other benefit") as a conversion incentive. In summary, documented evidence from historical records, academic research, and contemporary legal and political controversies indicates that Christian missions have intentionally linked their health services to their ulterior motive of proselytization. This is done by creating a supportive environment for conversion, especially among vulnerable populations, often through the integration of spiritual care with medical treatment. The use of medical aid as an "inducement" remains a central point of contention in modern Indian society.

Now let me turn my attention to the third model, viz. conversion through orphanages. Let me at the very outset make it very clear that the idea of an orphanage is an alien idea to Hindus. It was introduced to India primarily through non-indigenous means, particularly during the colonial and post-colonial periods. The establishment of formal orphanages in India by Christian groups is rooted in a history that contrasts sharply with the traditional Hindu social security net. Historically, the Hindu Joint Family (*Kutumb*) system served as the default safety net. In the event of a child losing one or both parents, the responsibility for their care automatically fell on the extended family (grandparents, uncles, aunts, or older siblings). The child was integrated into the household of a relative, a practice known today as Kinship Care. Caring for the vulnerable, especially within one's kin group, was viewed as a moral and religious duty (*dharma*). Neglecting the members of one's family, particularly children and the aged, was highly stigmatized (*adharma*). Hence, an institution like orphanage was neither required nor conceived of by Hindus.

Ancient texts like the *Arthashastra*⁷³ also mention the King's duty (a sentiment that is not found in Machiavelli) to provide maintenance for the orphans, the aged, and the helpless, showcasing a state-level commitment to welfare when the family system failed. "Elders among the villagers shall improve the property of bereaved minors till the latter attain their age; ..." is the law laid down in the *Arthashastra* (*Arthashastra* 2.1.24). Children raised within the joint family,

even without their birth parents, were typically not seen as isolated “orphans” but as integral parts of the extended family unit. This minimized the social stigma and trauma associated with institutionalization. Modern laws, like the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA), are an evolution of this principle, providing a legal framework for adoption within the Hindu community, largely prioritizing a family-based approach (kinship, adoption, or foster care) promoting the traditional *Kutumb* values.

The earliest orphanages in India were established in Goa by the Portuguese authorities primarily through the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, founded in 1511 by Afonso de Albuquerque. These institutions initially served Portuguese orphans, widows, and the local destitute amid colonial hardships such as diseases, wars, and high mortality. However, they soon evolved into centres for institutional proselytization under state patronage and ecclesiastical authority.

In pursuit of religious and political consolidation, several laws were enacted to facilitate the conversion of non-Christian children, especially orphans, ensuring their upbringing in the Catholic faith. For instance, a 1556 decree mandated the compulsory baptism and conversion to Catholicism of all Hindu children under 14 whose fathers had died. This enforcement was overseen by the office of the *Pai dos Cristãos*, a post held by a Jesuit priest empowered to execute these conversion laws and seize children. Following protests from the Hindu community, the rule was modified in 1559 to restrict conversions to children without parents or grandparents. Despite this, the law was broadly applied, often disregarding the Hindu *Kutumb* (joint family) system, and children were frequently taken even if living relatives existed.

Historical records and allegations reveal that authorities exploited legal ambiguities and wielded power to appropriate children and family assets, especially when surviving relatives were poor or lacked legal means to resist. Concealing Hindu children from authorities was criminalized, fostering an atmosphere of fear that turned the death of a father or both parents into a trigger for forced conversion and state intervention. Under the legal guise of caring for orphans, children were compulsorily raised in Catholic institutions like the College of St. Paul (St. Paul's College) and other Jesuit or Franciscan orphanages and seminaries.

This policy aimed not only at religious conversion but also at undermining the traditional Hindu *Kutumb* system, which traditionally provided social security to children without immediate parents. By removing orphans from Hindu families, the Portuguese undermined indigenous social structures and ensured these vulnerable children were culturally integrated into the Portuguese colonial system through Catholic indoctrination. Figures such as St. Francis Xavier were instrumental in demanding the establishment of the Goa Inquisition in 1560 and advocating for aggressive conversion policies. Church and state seized Hindu children during Inquisition raids, baptizing and raising them in orphanages to ensure Catholic indoctrination, as Hindu parents faced exile, execution, or reconversion bans; records note separations to prevent relapse into

idolatry. This aligned with policies banning Hindu practices, using orphanages for Christian assimilation amid mass conversions.

The Portuguese Crown viewed the propagation of Catholicism as a core imperial mission (*Estado da Índia*). Targeting orphans for conversion was a long-term strategy to create a native population loyal to the Portuguese colonial administration, ensuring political control and cultural assimilation through religion and education. The primary goal of this exercise was not welfare of people but eradication of non-Christian faiths (Hinduism and Islam) and the establishment of Catholicism in the colony. The tradition continues till date unabated.

Starting in the 1800s, Christian missionaries established numerous centres, particularly during major famines, providing aid, education, and evangelism among poor Hindus and tribals. This practice established a long-standing association between charitable relief and proselytization efforts. This institutional presence significantly expanded post-1950, notably with the growth of the Missionaries of Charity under Mother Teresa. Following India's independence, this institutional model continued to grow, with many groups operating and expanding their social services, including orphanages, through Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

In the contemporary context, there are serious allegations of coercive conversion against many of these Christian-run orphanages, many being run without any official registration under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act). These institutions, including those run by the Missionaries of Charity and tribal groups, coerce Hindu, tribal, or orphaned children to convert. The alleged methods include mandatory Bible reading, compulsory cross-wearing, enforced church visits, and prayer mandates. These activities are cited as violating both state anti-conversion laws and national child protection rules, particularly the JJ Act. Legal actions have been initiated against such bodies particularly in states with anti-conversion laws like Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Karnataka. The details of some of these cases are as follows:

An orphanage run by the Adivasi Sahayada Samiti (Council for Helping Tribal People), in Jobat, Alirajpur district, Western Madhya Pradesh, near the Gujarat border an outfit of the Church of North India (CNI), was raided by child rights officials in 2023. The facility housed 73 children (38 boys and 35 girls). During the raid, copies of the *Bible* were seized. Kalpana Daniel, the president of the tribal council and a CNI member, sought time to officially register the orphanage and obtain the required licenses under the JJ Act but the officials closed the institution before the process could be initiated.

In December 2021, an FIR (First Information Report) was lodged against a shelter home for girls in Vadodara, Gujarat, run by the Missionaries of Charity. The organization was accused of attempting to forcibly convert young girls to Christianity. The complaint alleged that the girls in the home were forced to read Christian religious texts (the *Bible*), participate in Christian prayers, wear a cross, and were served non-vegetarian food despite being Hindu, with the intent of converting

them. The Missionaries of Charity denied the allegations, stating that the girls were merely following the practices of the nuns they lived with and that no one was forced to convert.

However, "Christian leaders say the law is often used to target Christians in tribal-dominated areas, where missionaries offer education and healthcare."⁷⁴ A legal case⁷⁵ has also been filed against Priyank Kanoongo, NCPDR chief and his team for allegedly trespassing into a Muslim orphanage in Kaval Byrasandra, Bangalore (Karnataka), videographing the premises in a surprise inspection⁷⁶ in November, 2023.

The Biblical & the Papal Command for Conversion

Christianity, particularly the Catholic Church, views the evangelization of the world as a foundational, non-negotiable spiritual command derived directly from the Bible. This concept places the duty of spreading the gospel — the message of salvation through Jesus Christ — at the core of every believer's identity and the mission of the Church itself. The Christian belief in a global mission is rooted in explicit biblical directives. This mandate is most famously articulated in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), where Jesus commands his followers: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Other key verses reinforce this universal call:

- Matthew 9:37-38 uses the metaphor of harvest to encourage baptism campaign: "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."
- Mark 16:15 instructs believers to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."
- Acts 1:8 defines the scope of this work, stating believers will be Christ's "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
- The Apostle Paul emphasizes the urgency and nature of the work, describing believers as Christ's "ambassadors" (2 Corinthians 5:20) and commanding a duty to "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Missionary activity is also driven by the doctrine that conversion is necessary for salvation uniquely found in Christ and to escape eternal condemnation; sharing this saving message is the highest act of charity and obedience.⁷⁷ This deeply ingrained evangelistic ethos was formally and publicly reaffirmed by Pope John Paul II during his 1999 state visit to India, a nation characterized by its Hindu majority and long traditions of religious pluralism. On the occasion of the Hindu festival of Diwali (November 5-8, 1999), the Pope delivered a clear and unambiguous call for the intensified evangelization of the Asian continent. He stated that the Church in Asia should look to the Third Millennium with the hope that "a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent."⁷⁸ In his address in New Delhi, he urged bishops to increase their efforts "to spread the Gospel of salvation throughout the length and breadth of the human geography of Asia,"⁷⁹

highlighting that Asia, despite its small Christian population, was considered fertile ground for evangelization. He exhorted the bishops saying,

With the whole Church I pray to the Lord to send many more committed labourers to reap the harvest of souls which I see as ready and plentiful (cf. Mt 9:37-38). At this moment, I call to mind what I wrote in *Redemptoris Missio*: “God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel”. (No. 3: AAS 83 (1991), 252) This vision of a new and promising horizon I see being fulfilled in Asia, where Jesus was born and where Christianity began.⁸⁰

This aggressive expression of intent, voiced during a visit coinciding with a major Hindu festival, served as a direct statement of the Church’s continuing global mission that prioritizes conversion. When eyebrows were raised against Pope’s temerity regarding missionary activity, the Pope framed the right to evangelize and the right to convert as fundamental issues of religious freedom and human rights⁸¹ during an inter-faith meeting with Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and others. He explicitly defended the Church’s right to continue its missionary work in Asia, arguing that the inviolability of religious freedom meant that “individuals must be recognized as having the right even to change their religion, if their conscience so demands.” He stressed that “No state, no group has the right to control either directly or indirectly a person’s religious convictions... or the respectful appeal of a particular religion to people’s free conscience.”⁸²

By linking the right to evangelize and the individual’s right to convert to the core principles of human dignity, the Pope essentially elevated the Church’s mandate for world conversion to the level of an internationally protected freedom, positioning any attempt to restrict it as a violation of basic human rights. This papal message confirmed that the Catholic Church, driven by its biblical mandate, maintains an unwavering commitment to the global goal of seeking converts, viewing Asia (let alone India) as the next great frontier for this mission, and defending this work under the banner of religious freedom.

Besides the above theological imperatives, a few religious obligations, historical context, and socio-political factors also contribute to the practice of Christians seeking to convert people of different religions.

Religious Reasons

- Sense of Obligation and Love: Many missionaries genuinely believe they are performing the highest act of charity and love by sharing what they view as the greatest gift: the message of salvation.
- Theological Fulfilment: Mission is often seen as participating in God’s mission (*Missio Dei*), which is to reconcile the world to Himself. It is not merely a human endeavour but a divine one.
- Community Expansion: Conversion expands the size, influence, and unity of the global Christian “Church” (the body of Christ).

Political and Economic Reasons

While the spiritual reasons are internal and primary, historical and critical analysis often highlights political and economic factors that have accompanied — and sometimes co-opted — missionary efforts:

Political Reasons

- Colonialism and Empire: Historically, Christian missions, particularly those from European nations, were often closely tied to colonial expansion. Missionaries sometimes acted as a vanguard for colonial powers, traveling to new territories, learning local languages, and establishing schools and hospitals which, inadvertently or deliberately, facilitated colonial control. Conversion was sometimes seen by colonial powers as a way to “civilize” or make subjects easier to govern.
- Cultural Homogenization: The mission often involved replacing indigenous culture, social structures, and worldview with Western Christian norms (e.g., in dress, language, education, and family structure). This was often a byproduct of colonial-era missions, even when the missionaries’ intent was purely religious.
- Competition and Prestige: Converting the ruler or elite of a kingdom historically led to the swift conversion of the entire population, granting political prestige and influence to the sponsoring church or nation.

Economic Reasons

- Infrastructure and Development Aid: Missionary organizations are often among the first to establish essential services in impoverished or remote areas, such as schools, hospitals, and vocational training centres. While driven by a doctrine of social gospel and charity, these services can create a strong material incentive for conversion or an affinity with the missionary group.
- Exploitation of Poverty: Critics argue that in cases of extreme poverty, the offer of food⁸³, education, healthcare, or employment is a form of coercion or inducement, where an individual converts not for a genuine change in theological belief, but for access to vital resources.
- Funding and Financial Cycle: Large mission organizations receive funding from wealthier nations based on the success and scope of their work. The need to show tangible “results” (conversions, baptisms, new churches) to donors creates a continuous economic pressure to engage in active proselytization.

One needs to read the following text carefully as it hints at the hoodwinking strategies to be adopted to convert people⁸⁴:

“¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win

those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings." (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

These verses sanction a pragmatic, results-oriented strategy where the missionary's primary focus is not transparency but effectiveness — a strategy that can easily devolve into deception, or "hoodwinking," in the eyes of the group being targeted. This passage is a pragmatic justification for ethical compromise or cultural camouflage. "[B]ecoming all things to all people" is used by missionaries as a justification for cultural camouflage. This can involve:

- **Concealment of Identity:** A missionary may hide their Christian identity, background, or ultimate agenda to first establish trust, often by pretending to be a secular aid worker, a cultural researcher, or even a sympathetic participant in the local religion's festivals or practices.
- **The "Rice Christian" Inducement:** Becoming "like the weak" or "like the poor" is interpreted as using material or financial inducements (like education or medical aid) to create dependency and thereby *win* them, rather than simply understanding their plight.

Focus on the Goal: The phrase "so that by all possible means I might save some" is interpreted as an overriding utilitarian principle where the spiritual end (saving a soul) justifies questionable or deceptive means. This line is source of the all the tactics adopted by Christians to hoodwink their targets by using camouflaging their real intentions: Using Hindu or tribal symbols (like *diyas* or *bindis* in a Christian context) in a way that is confusing or misleading to the local population (syncretism) and failing to disclose the ultimate goal of conversion while distributing aid or education. Though the *Bible* strongly condemns hoodwinking, which it describes as deception through secret signs and malicious intent, hoodwinking is often used by Jesuit missionaries. It equates "winking the eye" with schemes and plotting evil, as seen in Proverbs 6:12-19⁸⁵. This deceitful behaviour is characterized by malicious intent and causes trouble and grief, and the *Bible* warns that such actions will lead to ruin and calamity for the deceiver. The example of Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656), nicknamed the White Brahmin is sufficient to prove the point. Nobili, an Italian Jesuit missionary assigned to the Madurai Mission in 1606, adopted the evangelistic strategy of duping through inculturation or indigenisation. His approach was a direct response to the poor conversion rates of earlier missionaries, whose failure he attributed to their disregard for the high reverence accorded to the Brahmin class by the local Hindu population.

To execute this plan, de Nobili undertook a radical transformation and adopted the external markers of a Hindu ascetic, or Sannyasi. He donned an ochre robe (*kavi*), shaved his head while maintaining the traditional tuft of hair (*kudumi*), wore the sacred thread (*upavita*), and strictly adhered to a vegetarian diet. To bamboozle the natives, he mastered local languages, composing texts in Tamil and Sanskrit, and even presented the *Bible* as a lost section of the *Yajurveda* to

claim high theological authority. When his non-Indian complexion aroused suspicion, he maintained his assumed identity, asserting he was a high-born Brahmana from Rome. His condescending method also involved reinterpreting native customs, such as the three-stringed thread, as Christian symbols of the Holy Trinity.

De Nobili's delusive tactics sparked an intense dispute among his fellow Jesuits and the Archbishop of Goa. The controversy was ultimately resolved by Pope Gregory XV's apostolic constitution, *Romanæ Sedis Antistes* (1623), which formally permitted converts to retain certain practices — including the sacred thread, tuft, sandalwood paste, and ritual baths — provided they were viewed purely as social customs lacking superstitious intent. Nobili's deceptive methods were revealed and exposed by other missionaries because of their rivalries. One needs to ponder if Nobili's acts and Pope Gregory XV's approval are ethical and provide a level playing field.

Façade of Equality: Ashrafs vs. Pasmandas & Christians vs. Dalit Christians

It is generally said that the Hindu caste system acts as the powerful “push factor,” driving out the socially and ritually oppressed who seek dignity. On 14 October 1956, B R Ambedkar wrote: “I renounce Hinduism which is harmful for humanity and impedes the advancement and development of humanity because it is based on inequality”⁸⁶ A large volume of scholarship views the rigid, discriminatory, and exploitative systems of caste, economic dispossession, and ritual exclusion — all maintained by the dominant sections of the Hindu social order — as powerful “push factors” that made conversion an appealing, and often necessary. The alternative Abrahamic faiths offered the “pull factors” of human dignity, social equality and material upliftment as they are based on the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. In this context, the concept of Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians is quite intriguing.

Hindus have been encouraged to convert to Islam by saying that caste system in Hinduism is oppressive and Muslim religion is egalitarian in nature. It is propagated that Islam unequivocally supports an egalitarian system and promotes universal human equality. The following foundational verses are often cited to prove the point: “Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you” (*Qur'an* 49:13), “Whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while he is a believer – We will surely cause him to live a good life” (*Qur'an* 4:124), and “Verily there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab or of a non-Arab over an Arab, or of a red man over a black man, or of a black man over a red man, except in terms of taqwa” (*Hadith* (23489 in Musnad Ahmad) affirming equality through taqwa/ piety. Besides, Muslims have had a dominant political (as rulers) and social presence in the Indian subcontinent for almost 500 years.

In this background, the discourse surrounding “Dalit Muslims” in India serves as a potent site of socio-theological dissonance. The proponents of the term argue that it is essential to name the systemic marginalization within the faith's social body though orthodox and elite segments of the community frequently reject the nomenclature. Terms such as Ashraf (who trace their lineage to foreign origins such as Arab, Persian, Central Asian, or Afghan roots), Pasmanda (the ‘left

behind'), Ajlaf (converts to Islam, primarily from lower-caste Hindu backgrounds) and Arzal (converts to Islam, mostly from Hindu untouchables) reflect deep-seated social divisions that persist despite the theological framework of the Ummah, which ostensibly unites all believers into a single family and explicitly proscribes hierarchies based on lineage, race, or occupation." Elite Ashraf groups historically monopolize religious authority, social prestige, and leadership, enforcing endogamy that reinforces hierarchy. This dissonance between Islamic theology and social reality creates a paradox which is reinforced by the state machinery.

The state's provision of OBC and SC reservations to Dalit Muslims functions as an institutional recognition of a *de facto* caste system within a community that ostensibly offers an egalitarian alternative to the Hindu social order. By acknowledging these "caste" identities for administrative purposes, the state simultaneously highlights the failure of the egalitarian promise in practice and the survival of deep-seated social hierarchies that centuries of Islamic rule failed to dissolve. Ultimately, this divergence exposes a significant contradiction: while Islam is presented as a solvent for caste-based oppression, the institutionalized reality of the Ashraf-Pasmanda divide suggests that the faith's egalitarian ideals remain subordinate to entrenched social stratifications.

Similarly, Dalit Christians are individuals who belong to the Dalit community (formerly known as "Untouchables" or Scheduled Castes) but have converted to Christianity, primarily to seek social equality and escape the caste discrimination prevalent within Hinduism. Despite their conversion, they are often subjected to similar forms of discrimination by members of the Christian community. If this argument is accepted the natural corollary is caste system is not a feature of Hindus only and even Christianity is hierarchal. Thus, the argument of the "pull factors" of human dignity, social equality falls flat. Dalit Christians clamour (agitate/demand) primarily because they are denied the statutory benefits and reservations guaranteed to their Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist counterparts who are also Dalits. The core of the agitation of the Dalit Christians is the demand for de-linking caste from religion in the eyes of the law, asserting that caste is a social reality that persists regardless of religious affiliation. Decoupling of Caste and Religion would officially acknowledge that caste is a socio-economic category of disadvantage that transcends religious boundaries, challenging the notion that Dalit oppression is solely a phenomenon of Hinduism. The Dalit Christian movement highlights Intra-Religious inequality among Christian societies. It also increases pressure on Christian institutions to address the internal practice of caste discrimination (e.g., separate cemeteries, seating arrangements, and leadership positions based on caste) that still exists within many churches. This discourse also helps us understand as to why Ambedkar chose Buddhism over Islam and Christianity.

A Muslim Invitation to Convert: Da'wah

The spread of Islam is viewed by Muslims as a moral and religious obligation (*far kifāyah*) — a collective duty imposed upon the community to convey the universal and final message of

absolute monotheism (*Tawhid*). This duty, known as *Da'wah* (Arabic for 'invitation' or 'call'), finds its foundation in the example of the Prophet Muhammad, who was sent as a "mercy to the worlds" (*Qur'an* 21:107), and is explicitly mandated by verses urging the faithful to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong (*Qur'an* 3:104, 3:110). However, the methodology for this evangelism is strictly prescribed, requiring the use of wisdom and good counsel (*Qur'an* 16:125)⁸⁷, and is ultimately limited by the Qur'anic principle of religious liberty, which states that "There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion" (*Qur'an* 2:256), affirming the final decision on faith rests with the individual. A mention of Khwaja Hasan Nizami's *Fâtamî Dâwat-i-Islâm*⁸⁸ (1920) will not be out of place here. Khwaja Nizami is a highly placed 'divine' in the hierarchy of Nizamuddin Auliya's prestigious *silsilâ*, and widely honoured in the Muslim world. In this book Nizami has outlined "how pirs, fakirs, politicians, peasants, zamindars, hakims etc."⁸⁹, could use fair and foul methods to convert Hindus. Sita Ram Goel writes about Nizami thus:

[In this book Nizami] advocated all means, fair and foul, by which Hindus were to be converted to Islam. He advised the mullahs to concentrate on Hindu untouchables, and convert them en masse so that Muslims could achieve parity of population with the Hindus. He disclosed in the introduction to his book that he had consulted many Muslim leaders including the Agha Khan regarding the soundness of his scheme, and that all of them had agreed with the caution that the scheme should be kept a closely guarded secret.⁹⁰

Dynamics of Da'wah and Conversion in Indian Context

Conversions to Islam in India, facilitated by the missionary effort known as *Da'wah*, (Arabic for 'invitation') result from a complex intersection of theological, political, economic, and social motivations, intricately linked with local historical contexts. Historically, political and economic incentives played a significant role, particularly during the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal periods. Alignment with the ruling Muslim elite offered distinct advantages, such as access to influential court positions and exemption from the *jizya* (per capita tax on non-Muslim subjects), thereby motivating conversions among certain upper-caste individuals, including Brahmins and Rajputs. Notable examples include Malik Maqbul (formerly Yugandhar), Khanzada Nahar Khan (formerly Raja Sonpar Pal) and Malik Hasan Bahri, who converted and subsequently founded powerful dynasties, illustrating how political ascendancy and wealth accumulation often superseded purely religious conviction. Sikandar Miri's counsel, a neo-Brahman-convert, Suhabhatta (var. Saifuddin) is held to have played the guiding role in the execution of those exclusionary orthodox policies by "instigating" the Sultan.

In regions like Southeast Asia, Islam primarily diffused through trade networks, where conversion offered merchants and local rulers access to lucrative global Muslim commerce, thus providing a strong economic impetus for adoption. However, the history of Kashmir presents altogether a different picture. During Sikandar Shah Miri's reign, lasting from 1389–1413 CE, rigorous abidance by Sharia was practised and the Kashmiri Hindu population was severely

oppressed. Qadis were appointed in the office of Shaikhul-Islam to enforce Sharia-based laws and drama, music, dance, gambling, intoxicants etc. were prohibited. Brahmins were forcibly converted, Hindu and Buddhist shrines of worship were razed, idols were smashed, statues were melted, literature in Sanskrit was destroyed and scholars of Sanskrit were persecuted, Jizya was imposed for those who objected to the abolition of hereditary varnas, and caste marks were prohibited. Because of this Sikandar is also known by his sobriquet Sikandar Butshikan (lit. Sikandar the Iconoclast) or Idol Breaker and “Butcher of Kashmir.” Upon a literary reading of *Rajatarangini*⁹¹, Sikandar’s zeal behind the Islamisation of society is attributable to a Sufi preacher Mir Muhammad Hamadani (or Sayyid Hamadani) who arrived in the region from Huttalàn (present-day Tajikistan) and stayed for about 12 years during his term, advocating for the creation of a monolithic society based on Islam as the common denominator.

Forced conversions and Islamic religious dominance were actively resisted by the Sikh community under the leadership of their Gurus because of which the history of the community is tragically marked by the brutal state-sponsored persecution under the Mughal Empire. The Sikh Gurus who famously resisted forced conversion to Islam and defended religious freedom, leading to their martyrdom, were Guru Arjan Dev (5th Guru, executed by Jahangir) and Guru Tegh Bahadur (9th Guru, beheaded by Aurangzeb). Guru Gobind Singh (10th Guru) militarized Sikhs into the Khalsa to protect conscience against Mughal oppression. Two of his sons, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh (aged 9) and Sahibzada Fateh Singh (aged 6), were captured, along with their grandmother Mata Gujri, imprisoned in the *Thanda Burj* (cold tower) during the peak of winter. The Mughal Governor of Sirhind, Wazir Khan, offered to spare their lives if they converted to Islam, but they steadfastly refused. As a result of which, the Sahibzadas were bricked alive in a wall.

Beyond the political sphere, economic and social factors drove conversions among the less privileged. Lower classes and Dalits historically embraced Islam as a means to escape poverty, and gain institutional support besides, yielding to different kinds of temptations and coercive methods. For instance, in early 1981, in Meenakshipuram (Tamil Nadu), Hindu-Dalits embraced Islam to claim social equality claim social equality and access economic aid from Muslim groups. Furthermore, social networking and familial influence often acted as key conversion vectors; when the head of a respected family converted, it frequently resulted in the conversion of entire kinship networks. In contemporary *Da’wah*, charitable and educational efforts — such as those pioneered by figures like Sheikh Ghulam Muhammad al-Wastanawi, who established comprehensive community uplift programmes (at Akkalkuwa, Maharashtra and elsewhere) — indirectly foster conversions by integrating individuals into a supportive social structure.

Ghazwa-e-Hind: Win Hindustan (Bharat)

Ghazwa-e-Hind, translated as “Holy Raid/ War on India,” is an Arabic term referring to a contested eschatological prophecy found within certain collections of Hadith (sayings and actions attributed to the Islamic prophet Muhammad)⁹². This prophecy foretells a future, decisive military

engagement involving Muslim armies conquering the Indian subcontinent. For literal adherents of the text, the prophecy details a successful final battle against the “people of Hind,” resulting in victory for the Muslim forces and the guarantee of spiritual rewards, including the forgiveness of sins, for the victorious participants. The concept thus functions as a specific form of Jihad (struggle), positioning the foretold event not merely as a historical conflict but as a prophecy of the end times linked to the global ascendancy of an Islamic political order.

While the primary focus of *Ghazwa-e-Hind* is military conquest and political dominance rather than peaceful *Da'wah* (religious conversion), radical interpreters view it as a necessary precursor to establishing an Islamic state in the Indian subcontinent (India is sandwiched between two major Islamic states). Mirroring historical patterns where military victory drove demographic shifts, this political order would compel populations to either convert or live as *Dhimmis* (protected religious minorities) subject to *Jizya*. By curtailing non-Islamic practices, the resulting legal environment ensures conversion is significantly incentivized or necessitated as a consequence of conquest.

The doctrine serves a significant, yet distinct, ideological function in contemporary geopolitical conflict. While not the direct cause of territorial disputes, the concept of *Ghazwa-e-Hind* is frequently cited by Islamist extremist groups and radical elements to provide theological justification and motivation for military action, terrorism, and proxy wars against India. Organizations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), which have historically targeted India, actively propagate this narrative to recruit followers and legitimize their violence. By framing their operations against Indian security forces or civilians as fulfilling a divine prophecy, they transform political violence into a religious obligation, offering spiritual rewards and eternal glory to participants, thereby serving as a powerful tool for radicalization.

The classical Islamic-theological-territorial binary of *Dar-al-Islam* (the territories where Islamic law is sovereign) and *Dar-al-Harb* (the territories where War is on to bring them under Islamic rule) can help one understand the ideology of *Ghazwa-e-Hind*. A central tenet of this framework is the principle of territorial permanence; once a territory enters the sphere of *Dar-al-Islam*, it becomes a perpetual religious endowment (*waqf*) and its reversion to non-Islamic governance is a theological impossibility. A group like Hamas uses this doctrinal principle to fuel the Israel-Arab conflict (see Articles 11–15 of their charter)⁹³. It also underpins irredentist rhetoric regarding former territories like Al-Andalus in modern Spain and Portugal. This same logic underpins the narrative of *Ghazwa-e-Hind*, a prophecy of an ultimate conquest of India, which is viewed as *Dar-al-Harb*. Once this land (India) is conquered for Islam, it should remain so forever, making its reversion to an “Abode of War” inconceivable.

The doctrine of *Ghazwa-e-Hind* fuels a profound existential anxiety within the Hindu community regarding an unending, generational struggle. The fear is rooted in the “ratchet effect” of this territorial philosophy: while Hindu civilization views land through a historical lens, the opposing

theological framework views any acquisition as a permanent expansion of *Dar-al-Islam*. For Hindus, this translates into a perception of a zero-sum civilizational conflict where their ancestral land, India, is viewed as a “missing piece” of a global religious/ Islamic empire and it is viewed by radicals as a “House of War” that must be converted. This leads to an enduring anxiety among Hindus that once land is lost to Islamic expansion it can never be reclaimed; their indigenous roots are cut forever and the very survival of their cultural and religious identity is threatened.

Religious Exhortations to Kill and Secular Constitution

Does some constitutional remedy exist to enforce the Fundamental Duty of fostering communal harmony under Article 51-A(e) if the content of a sectarian text is used to incite religious bigotry? This issue has been the subject matter of certain petitions in Indian law courts over some decades. Several petitions have been filed in various Indian courts, particularly the Supreme Court and High Courts, challenging the constitutional validity and violent nature of certain Qur’anic verses. One such case is known as “Calcutta Qur’an Petition.” It refers to the efforts starting in 1984 when Himangu Kishor Chakraarti sent a letter to the West Bengal government, followed by a Writ Petition filed in the Calcutta High Court by Chandmal Chopra and Setlal Singh in 1985, to ban and forfeit all copies of the *Qur’an* in India. The petition (Chandmal Chopra and Another v. State of West Bengal and Others (Matter No. 297 of 1985)⁹⁴, argued that the publication of the *Qur’an* contained verses that “incited violence, disturbed public tranquillity, promoted, on grounds of religion, feelings of enmity, hatred and ill-will between different religious communities,” and thus constituted an offense punishable under Section 153A and Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code. Approximately 85 verses (Ayats) were cited in the petition, categorized into those that allegedly preach cruelty/incite violence, promote hatred/ill-will, and insult other religions. Petitioners demanded a Writ of Mandamus compelling the State of West Bengal to forfeit all copies of the *Qur’an* under Section 95 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr. P.C.).

The Calcutta High Court, in both the initial judgment (May 17, 1985, by Justice Bimal Chandra Basak) and the subsequent appellate review (November 24, 1987), summarily dismissed the petition. The court’s primary rationale established a strong judicial precedent, asserting that the judiciary cannot sit in judgment over sacred religious texts such as the *Qur’an*, which is protected under the constitutional guarantee of Article 25 (Freedom of Conscience and Free Profession, Practice, and Propagation of Religion). The court explicitly held that invoking criminal forfeiture laws against a holy book would contravene the secular foundation of the Indian State and would likely aggravate, rather than curb, communal conflict.

Similarly, the petitioner in the Supreme Court of India (W.P.(C) No. 401/2021, Syed Waseem Rizvi vs. Union of India) had prayed for declaring twenty-six verses/suras contained in the *Qur’an* violative of Law of the Land as they promote extremism, terrorism and pose serious threat to the sovereignty, unity and integrity of the country. The petitioner had also prayed for restraining the Muslim minority intuitions throughout the country from imparting religious teachings in the basis

of 26 verses of holy *Qur'an* and to restrain the Imams of Muslim community from delivering sermons in the mosques and other gatherings. the 26 verses. The Supreme Court Bench⁹⁵ comprising Justice RF Nariman, Justice BR Gavai and Justice Hrishikesh Roy on April 12, 2021 dismissed the petition and imposed a cost of Rs 50,000 on the petitioner for filing a frivolous application that challenged foundational religious doctrine.

Collectively, these legal actions illustrate that Indian courts consistently treat the constitutional right to religious practice as paramount, declining to interfere with the scriptural content of established faiths. From the perspective of Hindus, such judgments do not foster communal harmony but give a long rope to incite communal hatred in short and long terms. In this legal framework, there are some contrasting voices too, however minor they may be. For example, on 31st July 1986, a significant judgement on some articles of the *Qur'an* was pronounced by Z.S. Lohat, a metropolitan magistrate of Delhi. The following are the details of the case.

A poster in Hindi, under the caption: "Why riots (Hindu-Muslim) take place in the country (India)," had been published on behalf of the Hindu Raksha Dal, Delhi, by its President, Indra Sain Sharma, and Secretary, Rajkumar Arya. The publishers of the poster had cited 24 articles⁹⁶ of the *Qur'an*, also a part of the Calcutta petition, and argued that these articles command the believers (Muslims) to fight against followers of other faiths; and as long as these articles are not removed (from the *Qur'an*), riots in the country cannot be prevented.⁹⁷ The poster read:

There are numerous (other) Ayats of the same sort. Here we have cited only twenty-four Ayats. Obviously, these Ayats carry commandments which promote enmity, ill-will, hatred, deception, fraud, strife, robbery and murder. That is why riots take place between Muslims and non-Muslims, in this country as well as [the rest of] the world.

In the above-mentioned twenty-four Ayats of the *Qur'an* Majid, Musalmans are commanded to fight against followers of other faiths. So long as these Ayats are not removed [from the *Qur'an*], riots in the country cannot be prevented.⁹⁸

The articles it cited were taken verbatim from an authentic edition of the *Qur'an* published by an orthodox Muslim organisation, Maktaba al-Hannat of Rampur in Uttar Pradesh. The edition provides the Arabic text of the *Qur'an* together with Hindi and English translations in parallel columns. As a follow up, both President and Secretary were arrested under Sections 153A and 295A of the Indian Penal Code. However, Delhi Magistrate ZS Lohat discharged both the accused on 31st July, 1986 with the observation, "With due regard to the holy book of '*Qur'an* Majeed', a close perusal of the 'Ayets' shows that the same are harmful and teach hatred, and are likely to create differences between Mohammedans on one hand and the remaining communities on the other."⁹⁹ Cornered by this legal, political and social reality, Hindus feel paralyzed by a profound sense of futility. They are at their wits' end for how to exist alongside a group whose guiding scripture precludes peace. They find themselves in an impossible bind — reaching for a hand of friendship that is withheld by the dictates of a page.

Reconversion

The emergence of any nascent spiritual tradition is historically contingent upon its ability to draw adherents from established faiths, thereby creating new ideological territories that often trigger a demographic and philosophical response from the parent tradition. Within the Indian subcontinent, the relationship between Sanatan Dharma and Buddhism offers a unique model of conversion and reconversion that stands in stark contrast to the exclusive, mission-driven paradigms of Abrahamic faiths. While Abrahamic traditions are frequently characterized by a “Great Commission” — a universal mandate to proselytize and convert non-believers into a singular, exclusive creed — Sanatan Dharma is historically rooted in a pluralistic, Dharmic framework. This structure prioritizes *Dharma* (righteous conduct) and core values such as *Shauch* (cleanliness), *Satya* (truthfulness), *Kshma* (forgiveness), *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *Indriya-nigraha* (self-control) etc., and over institutional expansion, viewing spiritual path-finding as a matter of individual self-conduct rather than communal recruitment.

Buddhism represents the first major internal challenge to the Sanatani population, arising as a heterodox sect (*Sramana*) from within the same sociocultural and geographic milieu. Despite this divergence, the two traditions maintained a high degree of mutual acceptance due to a shared emphasis on one’s conduct in every-day life in the form of the Eight-fold Path¹⁰⁰ (a sort of reduction from the elaborate list) for its followers and shared metaphysical vocabulary, including beliefs in *karma*, the cycle of rebirth (*punarjanma*), and the ultimate goal of liberation (*moksha*). However, Buddhism introduced a distinct philosophical shift by emphasizing the inherent sorrow of existence (*Dukkha*) and the impermanence of all phenomena (*Anicca*), codified in its Eight-fold Path. Unlike the Vedantic assertion of a permanent, eternal self (*Atman*), Buddhist doctrine was anchored in *Anatta* (non-soul), suggesting that the perception of a permanent ego is an illusion. This philosophy gained significant traction through state patronage by various Indian monarchs, allowing Buddhism to flourish as a dominant institutional force for centuries.

The decline of Buddhism and the subsequent reconversion of the populace to Sanatan Dharma were driven by a combination of philosophical consolidation and historical exigency. The decline was initiated largely through the intellectual efforts of scholars like Kumarila Bhatta and Adi Shankaracharya. Kumarila Bhatta, a proponent of *Purva Mimansa*, marginalized Buddhist influence by re-establishing the authority of Vedic rituals. Subsequently, Adi Shankara travelled extensively across India, utilizing rigorous logic to refute Buddhist doctrines such as *Kshanikavada* (momentariness) and *Shunyavada* (emptiness). By elucidating the *Prasthanatrayi* (the Upanishads, *Bhagavad Gita*, and *Brahma Sutras*), Shankara asserted the permanence of the *Atman* and the pursuit of everlasting *Ananda* (bliss). His victory over Mandana Mishra effectively absorbed the *Mimansa* tradition into *Uttara Mimansa* (Advaita Vedanta), achieving what historians often describe as a “victory by default” over Buddhist philosophy through intellectual synthesis rather than forced conversion.

The final transition was accelerated by external pressures, most notably the Islamic invasions which targeted the centralized and non-violent Buddhist monasteries (*Viharas*). Unlike the decentralized and household-based practice of Sanatan Dharma, Buddhism's reliance on monastic institutions made it vulnerable; once the monasteries were destroyed, the monastic order collapsed, and the laity was naturally re-absorbed into the resilient Vedantic fold or became the followers of the invaders. In the contemporary era, Buddhism occupies a minority status in India, representing approximately 0.7% of the population as per the 2011 Census. However, the tradition has found a new social dimension through the conversion of Scheduled Caste communities. This modern shift, often associated with the Navayana movement, is frequently motivated by a quest for social and political equity, yet it remains distinct from Abrahamic conversion as it operates within the shared civilizational and philosophical continuum of the Dharmic world.

However, a different kind of challenge was posed before the Hindu society with the arrival of Abrahamic religions on the scene. They were challenging Hindus on the political, economic and religious fronts and were using coercion in every aspect of life as is clear from the descriptions in 9th century Arabic chronicle Al-Baladhuri's *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan* (*Book of the Conquests of Lands*). Similarly, *Tarikh-al-Yamini*, written by Al-Utbi, a court historian for Mahmud of Ghazni, documents numerous raids (which began in the late 10th century and continued into the 11th century) as *jihad* aimed at propagating Islam and eradicating idolatry, detailing the massacres and immense plunder from wealthy temples like Mathura and Somnath. Al-Utbi describes the massacres and the appropriation of temple wealth as a triumph of faith over idolatry.

In order to address routine duties during the socio-politico-geographical conditions of their times, various *Smritis* (religious law texts) were written. These texts were considered pathways to pursue the four proper goals or aims of human life (*Purusharthas*) i.e. *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. For example, the practice of *Shuddhi* (purification/reconversion) emerged by the 10th century AD, primarily as a pragmatic response to Islamic incursions into the Indian subcontinent and the subsequent conversion of Hindus to Islam. This practice is notably credited with reversing mass Islamic conversions following Muhammad ibn Qasim's conquest of Sindh. To promote *Shuddhi*, and appropriate it as a legitimate religious activity, several specific *Smritis* were composed in Sanskrit, including the *Devala Smriti*¹⁰¹, *Atri Samhita*¹⁰², and *Brihadyana Smriti*¹⁰³. During the Islamic period, more efforts were made to preserve one's religious identity and faith and somehow resist the efforts of conversion under coercion (as is apparent from the struggle of Sikh gurus); reconversion to Hindu fold seems to have taken a back-seat during this period. Under British colonial rule, the landscape of conversion shifted toward Christianity as missionary influence expanded with state patronage, first under the East India Company and later the British Crown. This triggered a reactive phase of Hindu social reform, led by organizations like the Arya Samaj, which sought to defend and consolidate the Sanatani demographic through institutionalized counter-conversion and internal reform.

Arya Samaj took up this mission primarily in North India in the early 1900s. Their effort was named Shuddhi movement, derived from the ancient rite of *shuddhikaran* (purification), meaning purification or cleansing. The movement aimed at social reform, seeking to abolish untouchability by converting and integrating outcasts from other religions into mainstream Hinduism, thus elevating their position and self-confidence. It also strove to reduce conversions of Hindus to Islam and Christianity. The *Shuddhi* (“purification”) movement was a landmark religious and social campaign in colonial India, primarily associated with the Arya Samaj founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824–1883). He introduced the idea that Hinduism could be a proselytizing religion. He argued that anyone who had left the “Vedic fold” could return through a simple purification ritual. In his seminal work, *Satyarth Prakash (The Light of Truth, 1875)*, written in a debate (*vaad*) style¹⁰⁴, Swami Dayanand Saraswati employs a rationalist framework to critique Christianity and Islam, while systematically establishing the theological superiority of Arya Dharma (Vedic Religion). It may be recalled that Christian and Muslim¹⁰⁵ Missionaries of the day spared no efforts to trash the Vedas to achieve their goal of conversion. In the 13th *Samullas*, Swami Dayanand critiques the *Bible* as logically inconsistent, contrasting the Biblical God’s human-like traits with the Vedic ideal of a formless, perfectly just Supreme Being.¹⁰⁶ He systematically rejects the doctrine of atonement, asserting that the law of *Karma* is the only rational moral system because it holds individuals solely responsible for their own actions. As the Bible fails the test of logic, morality, and divinity, he concludes that the book is not the word of God; he rejects the concept of holy Trinity (God, the Son and the Holy Spirit); argues that Jesus, is an ordinary person and not the son of God; he proves Christian God to be a sectarian and interfering god suffused with human emotions like anger, jealousy, revengefulness, greed, favouritism who is neither just nor impartial; thus, Christianity is a false religion for Swami Dayanand.

In the 14th *Samullas*, Swami Dayanand critiques the *Qur’an* as a culturally specific text rather than a universal revelation, arguing that its sectarian divisions between “believers” and “infidels” contradict the principle of universal divine love. He rejects a partisan conception of God, asserting that the Vedic model of a formless, perfectly just Supreme Being is the only logically sound foundation for global morality. Throughout the text, Swami Dayanand establishes the superiority of the Vedic path by defining it not as a “religion” among others, but as the Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Law) that predates all sectarian divisions. He asserts that the Vedas are the primary, uncorrupted revelation of God given at the dawn of creation. He classifies Christianity and Islam as “man-made” sects (*Mat-Matantar*) that arose due to human ignorance and the corruption of original Vedic knowledge. It may be recalled that both Christian and Islamic doctrines of the era posited that ‘Salvation’ and entry into paradise were exclusive privileges of the believers. By extension, this doctrine condemned the ‘infidel’¹⁰⁷ or the ‘non-believer’¹⁰⁸ to eternal punishment, creating a binary of ‘Saved vs. Damned’. Swami Dayanand’s critique of Christianity and Islam busted this binary and established the superiority of Hinduism. In critiquing Christianity and Islam,

Swami Dayananda was applying the principles of Nyaya. He was indirectly admonishing the pluralistic Sanatanis who hold many paths (without any critical examination) can lead to the same Truth. Swami Dayananda proved that Christianity and Islam were not the correct paths and therefore would not lead to Truth. Thus, it can safely be said that *Satyarth Prakash* provides the intellectual blueprint for conversion (specifically *Shuddhi*). Swamiji urged all seekers of truth to abandon “false creeds” and return to the Vedic fold. He frames this not as “joining a new religion,” but as returning to one’s original, universal heritage. In this regard Pandit Indra Vidyavachaspati writes:

Swamiji condemned Christianity and Islam for two reasons. Firstly he had judged the danger of these two [i.e. Christianity and Islam] for Arya religions. He observed that Christians and Muslims [were] performing work of conversion of Hindus. ... Swamiji was [a] well [-wisher] of whole humanity. He wanted that all the human beings of Bharat and the [world] should adopt Arya Dharm. They may be Hindus, Muslims, Christians, [Buddhists] or believers of some other religion. Swamiji started the work of condemning so that believers of other religion should get rid of the misconception regarding Dharm.¹⁰⁹

For the actual procedure of reconvertng individuals (the *Shuddhi* ceremony), Swami Dayanand also authored a separate text titled *Sanskar Vidhi*¹¹⁰, which outlines the method of carrying out sixteen Vedic rites (*samskars*)¹¹¹ necessary for purification, acculturation, initiation and social integration into Vedic Dharma in a way that is devoid of any outward show.

That the impact of his dialogic discourses was immense, is evident from some of the recorded incidences by his contemporaries about his method and activities that led to the affirmation of Hindu superiority that led to re-conversion of some individuals. Here is one testimony by one of his contemporaries, Babu Gyan Singh, a teacher in a Missionary school regarding the impact of Swamiji’s discourses. He is recorded to have reported that the mission activities were on in his school where a group of some forty students had formed a group of “unbaptised Christians” called “Prayer Meeting.” These boys used to meet on Sundays and to organise prayers etc. They were Christians in their hearts but were outwardly Hindus. All of them would have converted to Christianity had they not listened to the discourses of Swamiji (1877-78).¹¹² He had already reconverted a boy in Jalandhar, with the support of some ordinary Hindus before his second trip to Punjab in 1878, in which he delivered a lecture on “Shuddhi” in presence of a Christian Clergyman named Baring, advocate Babu Ruliyaram, Pandit Kharag Singh, a Hindu by birth but a zealot Christian convert for twelve years who after meeting Swami Dayananda reconverted to Hinduism and married off his daughters according to Arya customs.¹¹³ “In Dehra Dun, in 1879, he re-converted a born Muslim giving him the new name of Alakdhari.”¹¹⁴ Subsequently, Swamiji was poisoned by a Hindu at the behest of a Muslim courtesan in Rajasthan. It is also widely believed that Dr. Ali Mardan Khan’s treatment worsened the Swami’s condition.¹¹⁵ When the cook, Jagannath, confessed of his guilt, Swamiji — true to his principles — not only forgave him, but also gave him a bag of money, and told him to flee the state so that the Maharaja’s men would not execute him.

Pandit Lekh Ram (1858–1897) was another Arya Samajist who spearheaded the *Shuddhi* (re-conversion) movement with missionary zeal. Lekh Ram's proselytization style was defined by a rigorous, often confrontational, intellectualism rooted in his mastery of Arabic and Persian. As a formidable practitioner of *Shastrarth* (theological debate), he utilized his linguistic expertise to engage in complex cross-religious polemics. His approach was not merely defensive but proactively deconstructive, specifically targeting the burgeoning Ahmadiyya movement. Following the publication of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's *Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya*, Vol. 1-5 (1880-1905), Lekh Ram authored aggressive refutations such as *Takzeeb-e-Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya*¹¹⁶ (1890?) and *Nuskha-e-Khabte Ahmadiya* (1888). Towing the contemporary Muslim accounts, the academicians describe his rhetorical style as inflammatory; he frequently challenged opponents with "life and death" duels of Logic (*vaad*), offering to embrace the opposing faith if defeated, but demanding total submission to Vedic Dharma upon his victory. By ignoring warnings and extending trust to a prospective convert from Islam — who sought to undergo *Shuddhi* on a fateful Saturday in March 1897 — Lekh Ram was fatally stabbed in his home in Lahore. The assailant's brutal technique and subsequent disappearance during the festival of Eid al-Fitr turned Lekh Ram's death into a powerful communal symbol for the Arya Samaj. The culmination of Lekh Ram's zealous career was marked by a violent martyrdom that mirrored the high-stakes nature of his missionary work.

Swami Shraddhananda, another stalwart of the *Shuddhi* movement, was a great champion of Hindu-Muslim unity during Khilafat movement, famously addressing the Jama Masjid in Delhi in 1919, dressed as a sanyasi. But when the Urdu pamphlet *dayi islam* ("Caller to Islam") by Khwaja Hasan Nizami came into his hands, he felt disillusioned. He immediately answered it in a pamphlet entitled: "The Hour of Danger: Hindus, be on your guard! The order has been given to attack and destroy the fortress of your religion in the hidden dead of night!" Swamiji found out that the pamphlet was in fact only the introduction to a larger volume called *Fâtamî Dâwat-i-Islâm*, which had been published as early as 1920, years before the *shuddhi* of the Malkanas started. In this Swamiji saw proof that the Muslim reaction of the day was not merely against the *shuddhi* and *sangathan* movements, but rather was part of a sinister plot hatched years earlier. In the conclusion of his own booklet, Swamiji suggested some ways in which the Muslim threat could be countered. JTF Jordens writes, "The openness and ethics of his methods stood in strong contrast with Nizami's tactics."¹¹⁷ Swami Shraddhanand intensified the reconversion agenda by founding the Bhartiya Hindu Shuddhi Mahasabha in 1923. Swamiji's effort was premeditated as one gets to know about the trail of events in *Hindu Sangathan: Saviour of the Dying Race* (1924)¹¹⁸. The movement generated a lot of heat, especially over the reconversion of the Malkana Rajputs. The rising tensions culminated in the assassination of Swami Shraddhanand by a Muslim in 1926, though the Shuddhi movement continued afterward.

Regarding the reconversion in early 1900s, Lala Lajpat Rai in his book¹¹⁹ has quoted the following remarks of the "Census Commissioner of the United Provinces of Agra and Oude":

Special efforts are directed to the reconversion of converts from Hinduism to Christianity or Islam, while persons who are Christian or Mahomedan by birth are also occasionally converted.”

. . . of such Mahomedan converts I have myself known at least one case, and others have occurred. There is a society affiliated to the Arya Samaj, which is known as the Rajput Shuddhi Sabha, which has as its chief object the reconversion of Mahomedan Rajputs to Hinduism via the Arya Samaj. On a single day 370 such Rajputs were converted to Aryaism. In three years, between 1907 and 1910, this society claims to have converted 1,052 Musulman Rajputs. (Census Report for U.P. for 1911, p. 134. Mr. Udey Vir Singh, Barrister-at-Law, Aligarh, is the secretary of this Sabha.)

Arya Samijists were not only social activists but also intellectuals. As a mass-awareness programme these scholars created a distinct literature, in Hindi and Gujarati, which tried to prove that Shuddhi is scripturally and historically valid in Hinduism. Some of these books are: Ramchandraj Shastri's *Patiton ki Shuddhi Sanatan Hai* (1923), Pandit Rajaram Shastri's *Shuddhi Shastra* (1926), Pandit JP Chaudhury's *Shuddhi Sanatan Hai* (1930) and Chandkaran Sharda's *Shuddhi Chandrodaya*. Shuddhi literature tried to counteract the erroneous belief that reclamation is invalid in Hinduism. Swami Shraddhanand, Mahatma Hansraj and Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya founded 'Bhartiya Hindu Shuddhi Sabha' on 13th Feb, 1923. It is active under the aegis of Arya Samaj, Delhi even today. Over the years, the visibility of Arya Samaj has gone down as the movement has slowed down but it is not dead. Some efforts continue to be made by Agniveer (a follower of Arya Samaj) even today without any change in the strategies and style, i.e. indulging in debate (intellectual appeal) and adopting some simple rituals as suggested by Swami Dayananda. The famous historian and Indologist, D R Bhandarkar has analysed the issue academically in one of his articles entitled, "Is Re-Conversion to Hinduism Permissible?"¹²⁰

The reconversion movement was not confined to North India alone. In the late 1920s in Portuguese Goa and Daman, prominent Hindu Goan Brahmins requested Vinayak Maharaj Masurkar, a guru from British Bombay, to campaign for the 're-conversion' of Catholic Gauda and Kunbis to Vaishnavite Hinduism. Masurkar toured Gauda villages, performing *bhakti* songs and *pujas*, which led many Catholic Gaudas to express a willingness to return to Hinduism. Despite strong opposition from the Roman Catholic Church and Portuguese authorities, a *Shuddhi* (purification) ceremony was held on February 23, 1928, converting many Catholic Gaudas *en masse*. Around 7,815 Catholic Gaudas from various regions became Hindus in this ceremony, and they were given Hindu names, though the Portuguese government did not legally recognize the name changes. However, the existing Hindu Gauda community refused to accept these neo-Hindus due to concerns over caste purity. Alienated from both their former Catholic and current Hindu coreligionists, these converts formed a separate, endogamous community known as Nav-

Hindu Gaudas (New Hindu Gaudas). This course was also adopted by some Rajput Muslims who came to Hindu folds.

Whether Indian Muslims and Christians should be Hinduized or Indianized (*Bharatiyakaran*) has been debated in some intellectual circles of various political affiliates.¹²¹ For some social activists these terms are synonyms hence interchangeable. Leftist scholars use the term de-Islamization or de-Christianization.¹²² On the social front, in recent years, several reconversion events in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Kerala, and Telangana have been organised by the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Hindu Raksha Dal and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). It has been termed *Ghar Wapsi* (Hindi, meaning “Back to Home”). RSS leaders argue that people who left Hinduism for other religions often did so under duress, material inducements, or false promises. Bringing these individuals back to Hinduism is considered a “correction” of an initial wrong, not a new conversion. They maintain that their ‘ghar wapsi’ programmes are for those who genuinely want to return to their original faith, and not by force. The RSS chief, Mohan Bhagwat, once justified ‘ghar wapsi’ by stating, “When the thief is being caught and my property has been recovered, when I am taking back my property what is new in it?”¹²³ However, Ghar Wapsi does not seem to be a core agenda of the RSS as is apparent from the following headline in *the Hindu*: “RSS wants spotlight on ‘sewa’ not ‘ghar wapsi’”¹²⁴ with a picture of Suresh Bhaiyyaji Joshi, the *Sarkaryavah* (General Secretary) of RSS.

The ritual of *Shuddhikaran* (purification) often involves a Homa (fire ritual) where participants chant Vedic mantras. In some cases, symbolic acts like washing the feet of the returnees by dignitaries are performed to signify their welcome back into the fold. Some *Ghar Wapsi* events (for example, in Chhattisgarh) involve the participation of “Royal” families or religious leaders to provide social legitimacy and “acceptability”. Traditional Vedic ritual items like *Gangajal* (holy water from the Ganges) for sprinkling, *Ghee* and *Samidha* (wood) for the sacred fire, *Tilak* (vermilion), and saffron scarves or threads are used in these ceremonies. Sometimes, new “Hindu” names or ancestral surnames are officially recorded. The primary goal of such incidences is identity reclamation — reversing what these organizations view as “cultural invasion” and a logical corollary is that the individuals retain their Scheduled Caste/ Tribe (SC/ ST) benefits which are often lost upon conversion to Christianity or Islam.

The *Ghar Wapsi* events are based on the ideological premise that all residents of the Indian subcontinent are ancestrally Hindu and, hence, conversion to Hinduism is “returning home” to their ancestral roots. In Western UP, in 2014, 72 Valmiki families in Asroi village (Hathras District)¹²⁵ and 200 Muslims in Agra¹²⁶ returned to the Hindu fold. Between July and December 2014, reportedly over 8,000 people reconverted in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.¹²⁷ In Hyderabad, a single VHP event saw 1,200 participants.¹²⁸ In 2019, approximately 500 Christian Dalits in Andhra Pradesh returned to Hinduism, pledging to cease church attendance.¹²⁹ In Kerala, in 2015, the VHP organized events in Alappuzha¹³⁰ and Kottayam¹³¹, where around 70 people (mostly Dalit

families) returned to Hinduism. More recently, in 2021, over 200 Christians and 30 Muslims were reported to have undergone the process.¹³² The Facebook page of Bhartiya Hindu Shuddhi Sabha¹³³ also reports certain cases of reconversion. The VHP's Dharma Prachar Evam Prasar Vibhag reported¹³⁴ preventing 66,000 conversions and facilitating 19,000 reconversions (*Ghar Wapsi*) — mediated through consensual counselling and affidavits — during the second half of 2024. In the village of Nauxi (Goa) residents have historically engaged in “homecoming” by reverting to ancestral surnames (e.g., Kunkolkar) and Hindu practices.¹³⁵ This often occurs without elaborate ceremonies, driven by a desire to reclaim roots lost during the Portuguese era.

The Muslim community has not accepted the “Ghar Wapsi” programme passively rather they have opposed it intellectually, religiously and legally. Prominent Muslim organizations, such as the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH) and the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), along with networks of Islamic seminaries like Darul Uloom Deoband, have systematically rejected the foundational premise of Ghar Wapsi. They contend that the programme’s framing of Muslims as “originally Hindu” is a historical and theological fallacy. Muslim scholars argue that for a believer, Islam constitutes their spiritual “home” (*ghar*), rendering the concept of a “return” to Hinduism invalid. This opposition has been articulated through public statements, press conferences, and scholarly debates, where the campaign is frequently depicted as a majoritarian assault on religious freedom and a deliberate threat to India’s secular fabric. This institutional opposition is complemented by sustained political and legal mobilization. Muslim groups and their allied political parties have actively challenged the Ghar Wapsi programme by invoking constitutional protections, specifically Article 25. They have raised the issue in debates, filed formal complaints alleging coercion, and demanded impartial application of anti-conversion laws. Localized tensions — ranging from protests to occasional street clashes between Hindu nationalists and Muslim residents — have also been reported.

Likewise, the Christian community has refused to accept the “Ghar Wapsi” (homecoming) programme “kindly,” viewing it as an existential threat to their religious identity. Intellectually, Christian leaders and theologians have mounted a robust counter-response. They challenge the programme’s historical and sociological premise, arguing that targeted communities, such as Adivasis, were not originally adherents of institutional Hinduism, thereby invalidating the concept of a “homecoming.” Prominent bodies, including the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India (CBCI), the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI), and leaders from the Church of North India and Roman Catholic Church, have invoked Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion. They describe the campaign as coercive and politically motivated. They have filed numerous petitions in High Courts and the Supreme Court against this programme. These legal challenges contest the constitutionality and discriminatory application of state-level “Freedom of Religion” acts, arguing they criminalize legitimate conversion activities while providing cover for “reconversion” programmes. Concurrently, these groups have sought judicial intervention for police protection of religious institutions and have established legal aid cells to document alleged instances

of coercion, social boycotts, and inducement. They have also organized large-scale silent rallies, such as those held at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, dharnas (sit-ins), and public prayer meetings. Community leaders have also organized signature campaigns directed at the Prime Minister and President, seeking national-level intervention.

The protests and reactions against *Ghar Wapsi* have not always remained peaceful. For example, between 1970 and 2007, eight attempts were made on the life of Swami Lakshmanananda, a prominent Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader who had spent four decades in Kandhamal working to re-convert tribal Christians back to Hinduism, before he was murdered in August 2008 by the local Christians. Swamiji had become an eyesore of the Christians because of his socio-religious campaigns and social-reconstruction activities. For example, he undertook a three-month *Rath Yatra* (chariot procession) through forest districts, which helped connect over 10 lakh tribal people with traditional deities (such as Lord Jagannath) and promoted their original beliefs, thus reducing the influence of missionaries. He presented an alternative to missionary-run schools by setting up ashrams and residential schools (Gurukuls), including the Shankaracharya Kanyashram for girls in Jalespeta (1988), which provided education rooted in traditional Hindu culture. He encouraged traditional agricultural methods, which clashed with the economic and social changes occurring in the region. He opposed the illegal land acquisition by missionaries. He aimed to make the tribal youth “strong, fearless, educated, and financially sound” while maintaining their traditional, indigenous beliefs, often fighting against the dilution of local culture by foreign influences. He also spearheaded anti-cow-slaughter movement which was not appreciated by the Christian groups. All these actions and campaigns of his were seen as obstacles to the expansion of Christianity in the tribal-dominated, impoverished areas of Odisha.

Muslims are not behind in displaying their defiant and hostile attitude and have raised inflammatory slogans (like “*Gustakh-e-Rasool ki ek hi saza, Sar tan se juda, sar tan se juda*”, “We will hang you in front of temples and burn you”, “*E Kafi-ro E Zaalimo Kashmir Hamara Chhod Do*”) against Hindus and perceived critics of Islam during protests and peace processions in various states. Though all these slogans are not directly related to (re-)conversion, they display the belligerence and aggression of one community against another. Such slogans not only intimidate people of other religions but also challenge the authority of the State¹³⁶.

The international response to “Ghar Wapsi” programme has been one of significant scrutiny and criticism. International pressure groups from the Christian (or Christian dominated states) and the Muslim nations become active and the charge of persecution of the minorities is lavished and pressed through various agencies like several Human Rights groups, different indices and the UN debates. Global media outlets, like *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Economist*, have largely portrayed the reconversion initiative as a majoritarian political tool. Furthermore, international observers (Christians and Muslims) have linked these campaigns to a broader narrative of “democratic backsliding,” arguing that the rise of Hindu nationalism undermines India’s

pluralistic reputation. International pressure groups and human rights activists have been equally vocal, often categorizing *Ghar Wapsi* as a form of “forced conversion.” The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has consistently flagged these activities, citing the VHP’s 2014-2015 announcements to reconvert approximately 4,000 Christian and 1,000 Muslim families in Uttar Pradesh as evidence of systematic religious freedom violations. Consequently, USCIRF has repeatedly recommended that India be designated a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC). Similarly, organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have documented the “cultural violence” associated with the campaign, noting that it fosters a climate of fear and social ostracization for those who resist participation. Hindus’ feeble and mild response remains a cry in wilderness because they are weak in numbers; the parameters of judging Hindus are decided by those who are not without bias and who are out to malign/ destroy them (as was done in case of the American natives by the Europeans). Human rights and freedom of one group is prioritized.

The consolidation of Hindu identity across Indian history reveals a significant methodological evolution, transitioning from the classical philosophical persuasion of Adi Shankara to the nineteenth-century reformist zeal of the Arya Samaj, and finally to the contemporary sociopolitical strategy of the “Ghar Wapsi” movement. In absence of any philosophical background of *Ghar Wapsi*, it is very easy for the rival groups to term the entire exercise a political movement. These efforts share a common objective — bringing individuals back into the Vedic or Hindu fold to counter rival ideologies like Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, or Christianity — their historical contexts have dictated a shift from winning “minds” to consolidating a Hindu “body.”

Adi Shankara’s 8th-century revival was fundamentally an intellectual *Digvijaya* (conquest) rooted in *Shastrartha* (scholarly debate). As an intellectual revolution, it targeted the philosophical vanguard of the era, utilizing rigorous *Bhashyas* (commentaries) to dismantle the logic of Buddhist and Jain doctrines. By establishing the metaphysical supremacy of Advaita Vedanta, Shankara achieved a “victory by default” through doctrinal synthesis, absorbing rival concepts to render them redundant. His legacy is one of ideological restoration, where the “tools” of enforcement were logic and scriptural elucidation rather than mass social mobilization.

The transition to the nineteenth-century Shuddhi movement of the Arya Samaj introduced a reformist, scripture-centric revivalism. Guided by Swami Dayananda Saraswati’s “Back to the Vedas” mandate, Shuddhi was utilized as a tool for radical social reform rather than mere demographic increase. By prioritizing the *Yajna* (fire sacrifice) and the investiture of the *Yagnopavita* (sacred thread), the Arya Samaj sought to transform Hinduism into a monotheistic, egalitarian “Vedic” religion. This was a revolutionary proselytizing mission that challenged both external faiths and internal Hindu orthodoxy by extending Vedic rights to the marginalized, thereby refining the “mind” of the Hindu through education and social equality.

In contrast, the contemporary *Ghar Wapsi* movement operates through a framework of cultural nationalism and ritualistic reclamation. Unlike Shankara's metaphysical debates or the Arya Samaj's theological reforms, *Ghar Wapsi* focuses on grass-roots reintegration among tribal and rural communities. While it retains the sacred *Homa*, its tools — the sprinkling of *Gangajal*, the application of *Tilak*, and the distribution of saffron scarves — emphasize a "homecoming" to an ancestral fold. This modern approach addresses the social and political incentives behind conversion, using symbolic acts like the washing of feet by leaders to ensure social acceptability. Ultimately, while all these movements share the core logic of *Paravartana* (reconversion) and reject birth-based exclusivity, the shift reflects a broader historical trajectory: from the internal religious reforms of the colonial era to the identity-driven, mass-mobilization narratives of the modern nation-state. In absence of any philosophical background of *Ghar Wapsi*, it is very easy for the rival groups to term the entire exercise a political movement.

On the global stage, the government must balance its domestic ideological goals with the demands of international diplomacy and economic integration. Transnational bodies and human rights organizations, such as the USCIRF, frequently cite these reconversion campaigns as evidence of a perceived decline in religious pluralism, which can complicate bilateral relations with Western powers and the Vatican. Additionally, the BJP faces internal political constraints within India's diverse federal structure. In Christian-majority states in the Northeast or states with significant Christian populations like Goa and Kerala, the endorsement of *Ghar Wapsi* can alienate local stakeholders and undermine coalition politics.

Conclusion

The discourse surrounding religious conversion in India transcends simple theological preference, emerging instead as a complex negotiation of cultural survival, legal interpretation, and political consolidation. As this discussion has illustrated, the fundamental friction arises from the structural incompatibility between the non-creedal, pluralistic framework of *Sanatana Dharma* and the exclusive, missionary mandates inherent in Abrahamic monotheism. While the former views spiritual truth as a multi-path inquiry, the latter often perceives it as a singular covenant requiring formal entry and prohibiting exit under the threat of apostasy. This divergence has historically transformed the act of conversion into a disruptive social force that fractures indigenous kinship networks and safety nets, such as the *Kutumb* and caste systems.

The legal evolution from colonial-era proselytization to modern anti-conversion statutes reflects a growing state imperative to protect vulnerable populations from "fraud, allurements, or force." The judiciary, through the landmark *Stainislaus* verdict,¹³⁷ has sought to balance individual freedom of conscience with the necessity of social harmony, effectively decoupling the right to share one's faith from the right to systematically alter the nation's demographic fabric.

In the contemporary era, the *Ghar Wapsi* movement represents a strategic pivot from the intellectual persuasions of the past to a modern reclaimant identity. However, as evidenced by the

institutional distancing of the BJP from more aggressive proponents of these campaigns, the ruling political establishment must balance ideological “homecoming” with appropriate philosophical backing to justify its actions.

In conclusion, religious conversion remains a “central flashpoint” because it touches upon the very definition of Indianness. Whether the future of the subcontinent will be defined by the “Great Commission” of proselytizing faiths or the inclusive “open-source” ethos of *Dharma* remains a question for history. However, it is clear that for the Hindu community, these shifts are viewed not as spiritual evolution but as a socio-political experimentation that challenges their ancestral identity and the pluralistic core of the nation. If Hindus are just pawns in this power game or a stepping stone for some to achieve power or a powerful stakeholder to safeguard their interests and identity will be judged by time.

Notes and References

¹ Susheel Kumar Sharma, ORCID id: 0000-0002-2220-072X, Professor of English, Department of English & Modern European Languages, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj – 211002, UP, Email: <sksharma@allduniv.ac.in>

² According to 2011 census, “Total Population in 2011 is 121.09 crores; Hindu 96.63 crores (79.8%); Muslim 17.22 crores (14.2%); Christian 2.78 crores (2.3%); Sikh 2.08 crores (1.7%); Buddhist 0.84 crores (0.7%); Jain 0.45 crores (0.4%), Other Religions & Persuasions (ORP) 0.79 crores (0.7%) and Religion Not Stated 0.29 crores (0.2%). The growth rate of population of the different religious communities in the same period was as Hindus: 16.8%; Muslim: 24.6%; Christian: 15.5%; Sikh: 8.4%; Buddhist: 6.1% and Jain: 5.4%.” <https://www.pib.gov.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=126326®=3&lang=2>. There are several states where Muslims and Christians are in majority. India is home to close to 11% of total Muslims Population of World. Lakshadweep (96.58%), Jammu & Kashmir (68.31%) are Muslim majority Union Territories, while Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, and Kerala have large Muslim populations, with significant percentages in Assam (34.22%) and West Bengal (27.01%). According to the 2011 Census, Nagaland (87.93%), Mizoram (87.16%), and Meghalaya (74.59%) are the states with a Christian majority while they have a significant populations (2011 Census) in Manipur (41.29%), Arunachal Pradesh (30.26%), Goa (25.10%) and Kerala (18.38%). www.census2011.co.in

³ इन्द्र मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान् । एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्यग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः || *indram mitram varunam agnim ahur atho divyah sa suparno garutman | ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti agnim yamam matarishvanam ahuh* || (*Rig Veda* 1.164.46) Tr.. “They have styled (him, the Sun), Indra, Mitra, VaruGa, Agni, and he is the celestial, well-winged Garutmat, for learned priests call one by many names as they speak of Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan.” www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/rig-veda-english-translation/d/doc830789.html.

⁴ Raj Chengappa, “Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu Becomes Battleground of Hindu Zealots and Muslim Fanatics,” Mar 15, 1983. <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/religion/story/19830315-meenakshipuram-in-tamil-nadu-becomes-battleground-of-hindu-zealots-and-muslim-fanatics-770499-2013-07-24>

⁵ [https://socialjustice.gov.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/CONSTITUTION%20 \(SC\)%20ORDER%201950%20dated%2010081950.pdf](https://socialjustice.gov.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/CONSTITUTION%20(SC)%20ORDER%201950%20dated%2010081950.pdf)

⁶ Sunan an-Nasa’i 4059, Book 37, Hadith 94, Vol. 5, Book 37, Hadith 4064, <https://sunnah.com/nasai:4059>. Also see: “... the Prophet said, ‘If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him.’” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 52, Number 260: <http://cmje.usc.edu/religious-texts/hadith/bukhari/052-sbt.php>)

⁷ नासदासीन्नो सदासीत्तदानीं नासीद्रजो नो व्योमा परो यत् । किमावरीवः कुह कस्य शर्मन्ममः किमासीद्गहनं गभीरम् ॥
न मृत्युरासीदमृतं न तर्हि न रात्या अह आसीत्प्रकेतः । आनीदवातं स्वधया तदेकं तस्माद्धान्यन्न परः किं चनास ॥ तम आसीत्तमसा गूळहमग्रेऽप्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वमा इदम् । तुच्छेनाम्बुषिहितं यदासीत्पसस्तन्महिनाजायतैकम् ॥ तम आसीत्तमसा गूळहमग्रेऽप्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वमा इदम् । तुच्छेनाम्बुषिहितं यदासीत्पसस्तन्महिनाजायतैकम् ॥ कामस्तदग्रे समवर्तताधि मनसो रेतः प्रथमं यदासीत् । सतो बन्धुमसति निरविन्दन्दि प्रतिष्ठा कवयो मनीषा ॥ तिरश्चीनो विततो रश्मिरेषामघः स्विदासीद्दुपरि स्विदासीत् । रेतोधा आसन्महिमान आसन्त्वध्वा अवस्तात्प्रयतिः परस्तात् ॥ को अद्धा वेद क इह प्र वोचत्कुत आजाता कुत इयं विसृष्टिः । अवाग्देवा अस्य विसर्जनेनाथा को वेद यत आबभूव ॥ इयं विसृष्टिर्यत आबभूव यदि वा दधे यदि वा न । यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन्तसो अङ्ग वेद यदि वा न वेद ॥

nasad asin no sad asit tadanin nasid rajo no vyoma paro yat |

kim avarivah kuha kasya sharmann ambhah kim asid gahanam gabhiram ||

na mrtur asid amrtam na tarhi na ratrya ahna asit praketaḥ |
 anid avatam svadhaya tadekam tasmad dhanyam na parah kim canasa ||
 tama asit tamasa gulham agre'praketaḥ salilam sarvama idam |
 tucchyena abhva apihitam yad asit tapasas tan mahina jayataikam ||
 kamastad agre samavartatadhi manaso retah prathamam yad asit |
 sato bandhumasati niravindan hradi pratisya kavayo manisa ||
 tirascino vitato rasmiresam adhah svid asid upari svid asit |
 retodha asan mahimana asan svadha avastat prayatih parastat ||
 ko addha veda ka iha pra vocat kuta ajata kuta iyam visrstih |
 arvad deva asya visarjanenatha ko veda yata ababhuvā ||
 iyam visrstir yata ababhuvā yadi va dadhe yadi va na |
 yo asyadyaksah parama vyomantso anga veda yadi va na veda || (Rig Veda 10.129.1-7)5

Tr. “The non-existent was not, the existent was not; then the world was not, not the firmament, nor that which is above (the firmament). How could there be any investing envelope, and where? Of what (could there be) felicity? How (could there be) the deep unfathomable water? Death was not nor at that period immortality, there was no indication of day, of night; That One unbreathed upon breathed of his own strength, other than That there was nothing else whatever. There was darkness covered by darkness in the beginning, all this (world) was undistinguishable water; that empty united (world) which was covered by a mere nothing, was produced through the power of austerity. In the beginning there was desire, which was the first seed of mind; sages having meditated in their hearts have discovered by their wisdom the connexion of the existent with the non-existent. Their ray was stretched out, whether across, or below, or above; (some) were shedders of seed, (others) were mighty; food was inferior; the eater was superior. Who really knows? Who in this world may declare it! whence was this creation, whence was it engendered? The gods (were) subsequent to the (world's) creation; so who knows whence it arose? He from whom this creation arose, he may uphold it, or he may not (no one else can); he who is its superintendent in the highest heaven, he assuredly knows, or if he knows not (no one else does).

⁸ “Kindly see: https://dharmawiki.org/index.php/Non-Translatable_Sanskrit_words

⁹ अहिंसा सत्यमस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः। दानं दमो दया शान्तिः सर्वेषां धर्मसाधनम्॥ (याज्ञवल्क्य स्मृति १.१२२) *ahimsa satyamasteyam shauchamindriyanigrahaḥ | danam damo daya shantih sarvesham dharmasaadhanam || (Yajñavalkya Smṛiti 1.122)*

¹⁰ धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः। धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम्॥ (मनुस्मृति ६.६२) *dhritih kshama damoasteyam shauchamindriyanigrahaḥ | dhirvidya satyakrodho dashakam dharmalakshanam || (Manusmṛiti 6.92)*

¹¹ सत्यं दया तपः शौचं तितिक्षेक्षा शमो दमः। अहिंसा ब्रह्मचर्यं च त्यागः स्वाध्याय आर्जवम्॥ ८॥ सन्तोषः समदृक्सेवा ग्राम्येहोपरमः शनैः। नृणां विषयैरेहेक्षा मौनमात्मविमर्शनम्॥ ९॥ अन्नाद्यादेः संविभागे भूतेभ्यश्च यथार्हतः। तेष्वाम्बुदेवताबुद्धिः सुतरां नृषु पाण्डवः॥ १०॥ श्रवणं कीर्तनं चास्य स्मरणं महतां गतेः। सेवेज्यावनतिर्दास्यं सख्यमात्मसमर्पणम्॥ ११॥ नृणामयं परो धर्मः सर्वेषां समुदाहृतः। त्रिशल्लक्षणवान् राजन्सर्वात्मा येन पुष्यति॥ १२॥ (श्रीमद्भागवतम् ७.११.८-१२),

*satyam daya tapah saucam titik seksha samo dama |
 ahimsa brahmacarya ca tyaga svadhyaya arjavam || 8 ||*

*santosah samadrkseva gramyehoparamah sanaih |
 nrmam viparyayehaksa maunam atmavimarsanam || 9 ||*

*annadyadeh samvibhago bhutebhyas ca yatharhatah |
 tesv atmadevatabuddhih sutaram nrsu pandava || 10 ||*

*sravanam kirtanam casya smaranam mahatam gateh |
 sevejyavanatirdasyam sakhyam atmasamarpanam || 11 ||*

nrnam ayam paro dharmah sarvesam samudahrtah |

trimsallaksanavan rajan sarvatma yena tusyati || 12 || (Shrimad Bhagavatam 7.11.8-12)

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/sb/7/11/8-12/>

¹² Levity, DNA. "The Dynamics of Religious Proselytization: A Comparative Analysis of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam", Jan 5, 2025, <https://blog.dnalevity.com/podcast/the-dynamics-of-religious-proselytization-a-comparative-analysis-of-judaism-christianity-and-islam/>

¹³ Haldane, J B S. "An Indian Perspective of Darwin", *The Centennial Review of Arts & Science: Darwin-Marx Centennial*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Fall 1959, 1859-1959, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23737640>, p. 357.

¹⁴ <https://www2.nau.edu/~gaud/bio301/content/heno.htm>

¹⁵ Griswold, Hervey D. "Some Characteristics of Hinduism as a Religion". *The Biblical World*, Sep., 1912, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Sep., 1912), pp. 163-172. www.jstor.org/stable/3141428.

¹⁶ Chopra, Aman. "Hamid Ansari Exclusive Interview: Former VP Hamid Ansari का धर्मनिरपेक्ष साक्षात्कार**", Zee News, Jan 30, 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uU6xzuntoE.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Hinduism is first and foremost a way of life. This means that Hinduism has tended to be orthoprax (stressing correct behavior) rather than orthodox (stressing correct belief). It tends to be woven through the differing elements of everyday life, rather than only performed as practices or rituals for certain days and times. Hindu religious expression is conveyed through every facet of society: music, dance, art and architecture, philosophy, politics, literature, and social life". James G. Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 2002, p. viii.

¹⁹ Frawley, David & Archana Sharma. "Secularism is Means to Control Religion: A Long Conversation" <https://epaper.navbharattimes.com/Mumbai/2023-4-1/16/page-10.html>

²⁰ Wirth, Maria. "Is Hinduism a religion or a way of life?" . October 16, 2023. <https://mariawirth.com/is-hinduism-a-religion-or-a-way-of-life-by-maria-wirth/>

²¹ "हिन्दू धर्म वर्तमानजीवी धर्म है, वह सत्य और ऋत का गठबन्धन है," Mishra, Vidyaniswas. "Bhumika," *Hindu Dharma: Jeevan mein sanatan ki khoj* (Hindi). Bikaner, Vagdevi Prakashan, 2016, p. 11.

²² "हीनं दुष्यति इति हिन्दू" *hinam dushyati iti hindu*

²³ Gandhi, M K. "What is Hinduism?" *Young India* (24-4-1924) in *Views on Hindu Dharma* by M.K. Gandhi . Compiled by Neerja Arun Gupta. London: Routledge, 2018, p. 37.

²⁴ हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् । तत् त्वं पृषन्प्रावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥

hiranmayena patrena satyasyapihitam mukhamA tat tvam pusanpavrunu satyadharmaya drstaye

Tr. The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, for the law of the Truth, for sight. (www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/ishavasya-bhashya-by-sitarama/d/doc145032.html)

²⁵ अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः ॥ २.३० ॥

ahimsasatyasteyabrahmacaryaparigraha yamah || 2.30 || Tr. Ahimsa (non-injury), satya (truth), asteya (abstention from stealing), brahmacarya (continence) and aparigraha (abstinence from avariciousness) are the five yamas (forms of restraint). www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/yoga-sutras-study/d/doc628740.html

²⁶ 'सत्यं वद धर्मं चर' *Satyam vada, Dharmam chara (Taittiriya Upanishad 1.11.2, www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/the-taittiriya-upanishad/d/doc79789.html*

²⁷ सत्यमेव जयते नानृतं सत्येन पन्था विततो देवयानः । येनाक्रमन्त्यृषयो ह्याप्तकामा यत्र तत् सत्यस्य परमं निधानम् ॥ ६ ॥ *satyam eva jayate nanrtam satyena pantha vitato devayanah | yenaakramanty rsayo hy aptakama yatra tat satyasya paramam nidhanam || 6 || (Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.6) Tr.:* "Truth alone wins, not falsehood; by truth, the Devayanah (the path of the Devas) is widened, that by which the seers travel on, having nothing to wish for to where there is that — the highest treasure attained by truth". www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/mundaka-upanishad-shankara-bhashya/d/doc145127.html.

²⁸ ऋणं ह वै जायते योह्यस्ति । स जायमानस्त्व देवेभ्यस्त्रिभ्यरु पितृभ्यो मनुष्येभ्यरु । *rnah vai jayate yohy asti | sa jayamanas eva devebhyah rsibhyah pitrbhyah manusy ebhyah* Tr. Verily, whoever exists, he, in being born, is born as (owing) a debt to the gods, to the Rishis, to the parents, and to men. (*Shatapath Brahmana: 1.7.2.1*).

²⁹ धारयति इति धर्मः *Dharayati iti Dharmaha* Tr. "That which upholds, sustains and even uplifts is Dharma". विद्वदिमः सेवितः सद्विभर्नित्यमद्वेषरागिभिः । हृदयेनाम्यनुज्ञातो यो धर्मस्तं निबोधत ॥ १ ॥ *vidvadbhih sevita sadbhir nityam advesaragibhih | hrdayenabhyanujnat o yo dharmas tam nibodhata || 1 || Tr. Learn that Dharma, which*

has been ever followed by, and sanctioned by the heart of, the learned and the good, who are free from love and hate. (*Manusmriti* 2.1)

“*Yashishta Dharmashastra* — ‘Dharma is that which is enjoined in Shruti and Smriti.’

Jaimini, *Mimamsa-sutra*, 1.1.2. — ‘Dharma is that which is described in the Veda as conducive to good.’

Kanada, *Vaisesika-sutra*, 1.2.2. — ‘That is Dharma which brings about prosperity and the highest good.’

Apastamba, *Dharma-sutra*, 1.20.7. — ‘That the doing whereof gentlemen praise is Dharma, and that which they deprecate is Adharma.’

Kumarila, *Shlokavartika*, 2.14. — ‘The fact of these acts being conducive to good is, in every case, learnt from the Veda; and in this sense are they regarded as Dharma; and for this reason Dharma is not perceptible by the senses.’

Visvamitra (quoted in *Parasharamadhava*, p. 80) — ‘That the doing of which men learned in the scriptures praise is Dharma; that which they deprecate is called Adharma.’

Under all these definitions ‘Dharma’ is the name of the ‘meritorious act’; but the term has also been used in the sense of the merit acquired by the doing of the act.

Nyaaya view (quoted in *Viramitrodaya - Paribhasha*, p. 29). — ‘Dharma is that quality of man which is brought about by the performance of the enjoined act: Adharma is that quality of man which is brought about by the performance of the forbidden act.’” www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmriti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc145572.html.

³⁰ *Chaturashrama: Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa*, चतुराश्रमः ब्रह्मचर्य, गृहस्थ, वानप्रस्थ और संन्यास. The four Ashramas consist of *Brahmacharya* up to 25 years for learning and grooming for life; *Grihastha* from 26 to 50 years for marriage and worldly activities; *Vanaprastha* from 51 to 75 when one retires from active family/social life to be a forest-dweller and devote one’s time in religious, philosophical pursuit. In *Sannyasa*, one lives, from 75 to the end of one’s life, the life of an ascetic, contemplating on supernatural, pure philosophy, accepting whatever is available for sustaining the life. One helps the society in whatever manner possible, giving benefit of long experience and knowledge accumulated during the lifetime.

³¹ *Chaturvarna: Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra*, चतुर्वर्णः ब्राह्मण, क्षत्रिय, वैश्य और शूद्र

³² Matthew 13: 49-50.

³³ *Quran* 22:19-22.

³⁴ *Quran* 4:51-56, 9:74.

³⁵ Matthew 28:19-20, *Quran* 9.5.

³⁶ Maria Wirth, “Of Course, Hindus Won’t Be Thrown Into Hell”. Hindu Vivek Kendra, February 18, 2018. <https://www.hvk.org/2018/0218/89.html>

³⁷ Idem

³⁸ Griswold, Hervey D. “Some Characteristics of Hinduism as a Religion”. *The Biblical World*, Sep., 1912, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Sep., 1912), pp. 163-172. www.jstor.org/stable/3141428.

³⁹ Sarah Lee, “The Role of Proselytizing in Religion”, <https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/the-role-of-proselytizing-in-religion>.

⁴⁰ F. Max Müller, “On Missions: Lecture Delivered in Westminster Abbey, on December 3, 1873”. New York: Scribner, Armstrong, And Company. 1874, p. 35.

⁴¹ For details one may see the following well-researched articles: Saswati Sarkar, “The missing Hindus in South Asia and a conspiracy of silence”, Dec 22, 2014, <https://www.dailyo.in/politics/the-missing-hindus-in-south-asia-and-a-conspiracy-of-silence-1149>; Saswati Sarkar, “Discrimination against Hindus in Indian public discourse”, Dec 30, 2014, <https://swarajyamag.com/politics/discrimination-against-hindus-in-indian-public-discourse>; Pingali Gopal, “Being a Hindu in India: The Agony and the Ecstasy”, December 17, 2018, <https://www.indiafacts.org.in/being-a-hindu-in-india-the-agony-and-the-ecstasy/> and Saswati Sarkar, Shanmukh, and Dikgaj, “The Lesser Hindus of India and The Detention camps of the Indian State”, <https://sringeribelur.com/the-lesser-hindus-of-india-and-the-detention-camps-of-the-indian-state/>

⁴² Soutik Biswas, “‘There is no law and order. And Hindus are being targeted again’”, 7 August 2024, Soutik Biswas, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cwy77vgmjzlo>.

⁴³ कोउ नृप होई हगै का हानि, चेरी छाडि कि होइब रानी” Tulsidas’s *Ramcharitmanas* (2.15.3), <https://ramcharitmanas.info/collection/saraswati-ji-perverts-the-mind-of-manthara-conversation-between-manthara-and-kaikeyi/>

⁴⁴ For details see: Lauren Benton. *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History*, 1400-1900. Cambridge University Press, 2002. pp. 120–123 and Teotonio R. De Souza. *The Portuguese in Goa*, in

Acompanhando a Lusofonia em Goa: Preocupações e experiências pessoais (PDF). Lisbon: Grupo Lusofona. 2016, pp. 28–29.

⁴⁵ AND Haksar, “When the Dead Speak”, *Hindustan Times*, Jul 23, 2012. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/when-the-dead-speak/story-MZ1BwBRyk7IGS8bwg4t5IM.html>

⁴⁶ Halal is any item that has been prepared according to the guidelines set forth in the *Quran* and Sunnah.

⁴⁷ <https://halalindia.co.in/2023/02/26/indian-brands-get-halal-stamp/>

⁴⁸ “He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that over which any other (name) than (that of) Allah has been invoked; but whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring, nor exceeding the limit, no sin shall be upon him; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” *Qur'an* 2.173.

⁴⁹ <https://halalindia.co.in/>

⁵⁰ <https://halalindia.co.in/>

⁵¹ <https://divyayoga.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/HALAL.pdf>

⁵² The bag in which I was given Lord Jagannatha prasadam in a local shop in Puri had a tag-line of it being Halal certified.

⁵³ It is approximately 38 lakh acres (3.8 million acres) as per the WAMSI portal data (as of March 2025)

⁵⁴ “... the Quran’s command to struggle (the literal meaning of the word jihad) in the path of God ... jihad refers to the obligation incumbent on all Muslims, individuals and the community, to follow and realize God’s will ... Jihad also includes the right, indeed the obligation, to defend Islam and the community from aggression. Throughout history, the call to jihad has rallied Muslims to the defense of Islam. ... Jihad is a concept with multiple meanings, used and abused throughout Islamic history. Although it has always been an important part of the Islamic tradition, in recent years some Muslims have maintained that jihad is a universal religious obligation for all true Muslims to join the jihad to promote a global Islamic revolution.” John L. Esposito, “Jihad: Holy or Unholy War?” www.unaoc.org/repository/Esposito_Jihad_Holy_Unholy.pdf. “Jihadists see violent struggle as necessary to eradicate obstacles to restoring God’s rule on Earth and defending the Muslim community, or umma, against infidels and apostates. If the umma is threatened by an aggressor, they hold that jihad is not just a collective obligation (*fard kifaya*), but an individual duty (*fard ayn*) that must be fulfilled by every able Muslim, just like ritual prayer and fasting during Ramadan.” “What is jihadism?”, 11 December 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30411519#:~:text=A%20BBC%20investigation%20has%20found,for%20the%20faith%20against%20unbelievers>.

⁵⁵ The term literally means “the conquest of India” and refers to a prophesied holy war of India. The concept appears in a few verses of Hadith. “What is mentioned in the hadith of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah have mercy on him), which was narrated by Na’eem ibn Hammaad, about the conquest of India has not happened up till now, but it will happen when ‘Eesaa ibn Maryam (peace be upon him) descends, if the hadith that says that is saheeh.” For details kindly see: <https://islamqa.info/en/answers/145636/hadith-about-the-conquest-of-india>

⁵⁶ “BJP Vs ‘Vote Jihad’? Bizarre Call by Salman Khurshid’s Niece | How SP’s Maria Alam Sparked Row,” *Times Now*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYpcXjbFQ-I>.

⁵⁷ https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/bills_parliament/2005/AC_Draft_Communal_Violence_Bill_2011.pdf

⁵⁸ “Internet Modern History Sourcebook, St. Francis Xavier: Letter from India, to the Society of Jesus at Rome, 1543,” <https://sourcebooks.web.fordham.edu/mod/1543xavier1.asp>

⁵⁹ Henry James Coleridge, *The Life and letters of St. Francis Xavier*. Vol I. London: Burns and Oates, 1881. p. 153. <https://archive.org/details/lifelettersofstf01coleuoft>.

⁶⁰ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (1 Corinthians 13: 4-7)

⁶¹ <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2478231803/view?partId=nla.obj-2478232434>

⁶² Leonard Fernando, SJ. “Jesuits and India”. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935420.013.59>

⁶³ Sir George Otto Trevelyan. *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, London: Longmans, Green, 1876, pp. 454-56.

⁶⁴ John C.B. Webster, *A Social History of Christianity: North-west India since 1800*, Oxford University Press, 2018.

⁶⁵ Chaman Shahzad Masih and Ghulam Shabbir, “The Role of Christian Missionaries in Colonial India: An Exploratory Study”, *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review* October-Dec 2024, Vol. 8, No. 4, [pp. 146-155] [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2024\(8-IV\)15](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2024(8-IV)15).

⁶⁶ Ines G. Županov. “Conversion, Illness and Possession: Catholic Missionary Healing In Early Modern South Asia” in Županov, Ines G., and Caterina Guenzi (editors). *Divins remèdes*. Éditions de l’École des hautes études en

sciences sociales, 2009, pp. p. 263-300. <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.editionsehess.21621>.

⁶⁷ James Staples, "Putting Indian Christianities into Context: Biographies of Christian Conversion in a Leprosy Colony", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (July 2014), pp. 1134-1159. www.jstor.org/stable/24494615.

⁶⁸ "Delhi Court issues summon to IMA president Dr John Austin Jayalal for talking about converting Covid-19 patients to Christianity," <https://www.opindia.com/2021/05/delhi-court-summon-ima-president-convert-covid-patients-christianity/>

⁶⁹ Jayalal, Johnrose Austin. "In the Name of the Great Physician," www.haggai-international.org. <https://archive.is/ccydA#selection-819.4-819.27>. Also see: <https://archive.is/QL0BM>.

⁷⁰ Morgan Lee, "An Indian Christian Doctor Sees COVID-19's Silver Linings," *Christianity Today*, March 30, 2021. www.christianitytoday.com/2021/03/india-covid-19-pandemic-medical-association/

⁷¹ HENB Web Desk, "Delhi Court issued summon to IMA Chief Dr Johnrose Austin Jayalal for intending Conversions of Covid Patients to Christianity in hospitals during pandemic." New Delhi, May 29, 2021. <https://hinduexistence.org/2021/05/30/delhi-advocate-filed-complaint-against-ima-chief-dr-jayalal-for-his-alleged-intention-for-converting-covid-patients-to-christianity-in-pandemic-situations/>

⁷² Currently, there is no national anti-conversion law, but 10 states in India have enacted anti-conversion laws (also known as "Freedom of Religion" Acts) as of late 2025 to curb conversions by force, fraud, allurement, or undue influence: Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh. Arunachal Pradesh passed a law in 1978 but never notified it for enforcement, while Rajasthan enacted one in September 2025; other states like Goa and Maharashtra are considering them. The Christian and Muslim organisations and their Hindu supporters have challenged the validity of these laws in various courts of law including Supreme Court of India and in some cases got some reliefs too. The lead case, *Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP) v. State of Uttar Pradesh* (filed 2020), contests these laws for violating Articles 14 (equality), 21 (life/liberty), and 25 (religious freedom) by presuming conversions unlawful, enabling misuse against interfaith marriages ("love jihad"), and imposing definitions of coercion/allurement.

⁷³ बालवृद्धव्यसन्यनाथाश्च राजा विभूयात्त्रियगप्रजातां प्रजातायश्च पुत्रान् *balavrudhavysanyanathansca rajaa bibhryaatstriyam aprajataam prajatayashca putraan* || KAZ_02.01.26 || "The king shall provide the orphans (bāla), the aged, the infirm, the afflicted, and the helpless with maintenance. He shall also provide subsistence to helpless women when they are carrying and also to the children they give birth to." (*Arthashastra* 2.1.23) <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/kautilya-arthashastra/d/doc365601.html>

⁷⁴ "Christian orphanage in India shut down alleging 'conversion'". www.ucanews.com/news/christian-orphanage-in-india-shut-down-alleging-conversion/102100.

⁷⁵ The Hindu Bureau. "Case filed against NCPCR chief for 'trespassing' into an orphanage". www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/case-filed-against-ncpcr-chief-for-trespassing-into-an-orphanage/article67572657.ece

⁷⁶ Puran Choudhary, "Kids living a medieval Taliban life" says NCPCR after surprise inspection of Bengaluru orphanage", <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/2023/Nov/22/kids-living-a-medieval-taliban-life-says-ncpcr-after-surprise-inspection-of-bengaluru-orphanage-2635252.html>

⁷⁷ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" (Romans 10:14)

⁷⁸ John Paul II, "Ecclesia in Asia," Apostolic Exhortations, The Holy See. www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html

⁷⁹ John Paul II, "Homily", New Delhi, November 6, 1999, The Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/travels/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_06111999_new-delhi.html

⁸⁰ John Paul II, "Ecclesia in Asia," Apostolic Exhortations, The Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html

⁸¹ Alessandra Stanley, "Pope Tells India His Church Has a Right to Evangelize", *The New York Times*, Nov. 8, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/11/08/world/pope-tells-india-his-church-has-a-right-to-evangelize.html#>

⁸² "World: South Asia: Pope defends conversions in India," *BBC News*, Sunday, November 7, 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/508610.stm

⁸³ In an Interview published in *The Hindu* (Nov, 2015), Jayanta Mahapatra spoke of his grandfather, as a sixteen year old, orphan and starving, who 'walked twenty miles to one of the free kitchens the Britishers had set up, and he became a Christian. Jayanta Mahapatra's poem, 'Grandfather,' gives a heart-rending account of this.

⁸⁴ This idea was put into practice by Italian Jesuit missionary Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656) who famously adopted Brahmin customs — wore saffron robes, applied *tilak*, wore the sacred thread (*poonool*), became vegetarian,

and learnt Sanskrit — to gain the trust of upper-caste Hindus and convert them, earning him the title “Roman Brahmin”. He believed this strategy of “Hinduization” of the priests to win trust of the Hindus. He mastered Sanskrit, Tamil, and Telugu, engaging in theological debates with Brahmins and presenting Christianity as a “fifth Veda”. His strategy of accommodating local customs (deemed social, not religious) received papal approval. John de Britto (Portuguese Jesuit missionary), Constantine Beschi (Italian Jesuit missionary), Henri Le Saux (alias Swami Abhishiktananda, A French priest), Jules Monchanin (alias Swami Parama Arubi Anandam) and E. Stanley Jones: An American Methodist evangelist are other such examples.

⁸⁵ “12 A troublemaker and a villain, who goes about with a corrupt mouth, 13 who winks maliciously with his eye, signals with his feet and motions with his fingers, 14 who plots evil with deceit in his heart — he always stirs up conflict. 15 Therefore disaster will overtake him in an instant; he will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy. 16 There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: 17 haughty eyes, lying, hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked schemes, that are quick to rush into evil, 19 a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.” (Proverbs 6:12-19)

⁸⁶ Rajesh Sampath. “A Derridean Reading of Ambedkar’s The Buddha and His Dhamma” in *The Radical in Ambedkar: Critical Reflections*, Edited by Suraj Yengde and Anand Teltumbde, Penguin Books, p. 378/580.

⁸⁷ “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best.” (*Quran* 16:125), <https://quran.com/an-nahl/125>.

⁸⁸ Khaja Hasan Nizami, *Fathimi Dawat E Islam*, 1970, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.498105>.

⁸⁹ J.T.F. Jordens, *Swami Shradhdhananda: His Life and Causes*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 140-141.

⁹⁰ Sita Ram Goel, *Muslim Separatism: Causes and Consequences*. p. 138/143. PDF. <https://archive.org/details/muslim-separatism-causes-and-consequences-sita-ram-goel>

⁹¹ It is a metrical legendary and historical chronicle of the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent, particularly the kings of Kashmir. It was written in Sanskrit by Kashmiri historian Kalhana in the 12th century CE.

⁹² “Hadith about the conquest of India, 10/Safar/1436 , 02/December/2014.” <https://islamqa.info/en/answers/145636/hadith-about-the-conquest-of-india>

⁹³ Raphael Israeli (Translated and annotated), “The Charter of Allah: The Platform of The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)” <https://irp.fas.org/world/para/docs/880818.htm>

⁹⁴ <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1594975/>

⁹⁵ <https://lawbeat.in/sites/default/files/2021-07/Syed%20Wasim%20v.%20UOI21.pdf>

⁹⁶ Kindly see for these verses: <https://www.sikhawareness.com/topic/13864-some-articles-of-the-quran-are-harmful-delhi-magistrate-zs-lohat/>

⁹⁷ <https://voibooks.bitbucket.io/tcqp/pref2/>

⁹⁸ <https://indiafacts.org/court-ruling-ayats-quran-cause-communal-riots/>

⁹⁹ Quoted in Sita Ram Goel, Sita Ram Goel [Compiled with an Introduction], *The Calcutta Quran Petition*, New Delhi: Voice of India, Third edition. p. 10/497, PDF. <https://archive.org/details/the-calcutta-quran-petition-sita-ram-goel>.

¹⁰⁰ The Eight Limbs of the Path: Right Understanding (*Samma Ditthi*), Right Thought/ Resolve (*Samma Sankappa*), Right Speech (*Samma Vaca*), Right Action (*Samma Kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*Samma Ajiva*), Right Effort (*Samma Vayama*), Right Mindfulness (*Samma Sati*), and Right Concentration (*Samma Samadhi*). For details kindly see: Radhakrishnan S. *The Dhammapada*, Madras: Oxford University Press, 1950. <https://archive.org/details/dli.ernet.527869/page/n3/mode/2up?q=eight>

¹⁰¹ M. L. Wadekar, *Devala Smriti*. <https://archive.org/details/devala-smriti-1-m.-l.-wadekar>

¹⁰² *Samurtar Chanadhikarana: Atri Samhita*, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.382823>

¹⁰³ In his article “Is Re-Conversion to Hinduism Permissible?”, D. R. Bhandarkar notes, “These and others, have been published under the title *Smritindia samuchchayak* in the Anandasram Sanskrit Series (No. 48).” https://archive.org/stream/calcutta_review/calcutta_review_3rd_v49_djvu.txt

¹⁰⁴ Indian philosophy features rich dialectical traditions, notably the Nyâya school’s distinction between truth-seeking *Vaad*, victory-focused *Jalpa*, and destructive *Vitanda* debates, alongside broader dialogical forms in Upanishads and Buddhist texts, exploring opposing views through structured argumentation.

¹⁰⁵ For example, see Md. Ismail’s *Raddi-i-hindu*, 1861, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.345726>, and Mohammad Ubaidullah’s *Tohfatul Hind*, 1277 (?), <https://archive.org/details/181-tuhfat-ul-hind>. The replies to such books were also written. This pamphlet-war culminated in a legal battle, the details of which are available in

Jeevan Charitra: Mahrishi Swami Dayananda (Authentic Translation of Pandit Lekhram's Collections from Urdu to Arya Bhasha), Translated by Aryamahopadeshak Shri Kaviraj Raghunandan Singh 'Nirmal', Editor: Bhawanilal Bhartiya, Delhi: Arsha Sahitya Prachar Trust, Vikram Samvat 2046, pp. 771-775.

¹⁰⁶ "Swami Dayananda made it his mission to stem the flow of this anti-Vedic and anti-Hindu current by showing that the conclusions of European scholars were faulty, and often affected by their conscious or unconscious Christian bias." Lajpat Rai *The Arya Samaj: An Account of its Origin, Doctrines, and Activities, with A Biographical Sketch of the Founder*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1915, p. 95.

¹⁰⁷ Islamic terms are Kafir / Mushrik: These are used for those who reject or associate partners with God, who—according to traditional interpretations of the Quran (e.g., Surah Al-Bayyinah)—are described as "the worst of creatures" destined for Hell.

¹⁰⁸ *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*: A Latin phrase from Christian history meaning "Outside the Church there is no salvation."

¹⁰⁹ Pandit Indra Vidyavachaspati, *Mahrishi Dayananad*, Delhi: Arsh Sahitya Prachar Trust, 2023, pp. 78-79.

¹¹⁰ Dayanand Saraswati, *Sanskrit Vidhi*, Ajmer: Arya Sahitya Mandal Limited, Dayanandabd 11, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.319604/page/n5/mode/2up>

¹¹¹ *Samskars* (known as *shodash samskars*) in Hinduism are essential because they are sacred rites of passage (life-cycle rituals) that purify the body, mind, and soul, guiding individuals from conception to cremation, fostering spiritual growth, instilling virtues, removing impurities, and integrating them into society by marking crucial life stages with spiritual meaning and cultural values. They act as a framework for holistic development, ensuring a balanced, meaningful, and value-driven life aligned with dharma.

¹¹² *Jeevan Charitra: Mahrishi Swami Dayananda (Authentic Translation of Pandit Lekhram's Collections from Urdu to Arya Bhasha)*, Translated by Aryamahopadeshak Shri Kaviraj Raghunandan Singh 'Nirmal', Editor: Bhawanilal Bhartiya, Delhi: Arsha Sahitya Prachar Trust, Vikram Samvat 2046, p. 349.

¹¹³ Ibid, pp. 349-350.

¹¹⁴ a) J T F Jordens, "Reconversion to Hinduism: The Shuddhi of the Arya Samaj", *Religion in South Asia: Religious Conversion and Revival Movements in South Asia in Medieval and Modern Times*, Ed. G A Oddie, New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1991 [1977], p. 216. b) The year of this conversion is 1877 in Kewal Ahluwalia, "Shudhi Movement", <https://www.aryasamaj.com/enews/2012/jan/4.htm> and in Yoginder Sikand and Manjari Katju, "Mass Conversions to Hinduism among Indian Muslims", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 29, No. 34 (Aug. 20, 1994), p. 2215.

¹¹⁵ Dr Ashok Arya, "Vish hi mahrishi ki mrityu ka karan", *Arya Jagat*, July 27, 2014 - August 2, 2014, pp.7, 11.

¹¹⁶ Takzeeb E Baraheen E Ahmadiya. <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.375240/mode/2up>.

¹¹⁷ JTF Jordens, *Swami Shraddhananda, His Life and Causes*. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1981, p. 141.

¹¹⁸ Swami Shraddhanand, *Hindu Sangathan: Saviour of the Dying Race* (1924), <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.66063/page/n11/mode/2up>

¹¹⁹ Lajpat Rai *The Arya Samaj: An Account of its Origin, Doctrines, and Activities, with A Biographical Sketch of the Founder*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1915, p. 221.

¹²⁰ Bhandarkar, D. R., "Is Re-conversion to Hinduism Permissible?" *Calcutta Review*, third series, 1933, pp. 33-39. <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.95766>.

¹²¹ See for example, V.D. Savarkar's *Essentials of Hindutva* (1923), M.S. Golwalkar's *We, or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939) and *Bunch of Thoughts* (1960), Balraj Madhok's *Indianisation: What, Why and How* (1970), Bipan Chandra's *Communalism in Modern India* (1984), Peter van der Veer's *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (1994), Achin Vanaik's *The Furies of Indian Communalism* (1997), A.G. Noorani's *The RSS and the BJP: A Division of Labour* (2000), Lancy Lobo's *Globalisation, Hindu Nationalism and Christians in India* (2002), Zoya Hasan's *Politics of Inclusion: Castes, Minorities, and Affirmative Action* (2009), P. Chidambaram's *Speaking Truth to Power* (2018), Zoya Hasan: *Politics of Inclusion: Castes, Minorities, and Affirmative Action* (2009) and Shashi Tharoor's *Why I Am a Hindu* (2018) and *The Battle of Belonging* (2020).

¹²² Yoginder Sikand and Manjari Katju, "Mass Conversions to Hinduism among Indian Muslims", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 29, No. 34 (Aug. 20, 1994), pp. 2214-2219.

¹²³ PTI, "RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat maintains silence on Ghar Wapsi issue", *Times of India*, Jan 4, 2015, 09.27 PM IST, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/rss-chief-mohan-bhagwat-maintains-silence-on-ghar-wapsi-issue/articleshowprint/45752557.cms>.

¹²⁴ Jatin Gandhi, "RSS wants spotlight on 'sewa' not 'ghar wapsi'", *The Hindu*, New Delhi: November 16, 2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/RSS-wants-spotlight-on-%E2%80%98sewa%E2%80%99-not-%E2%80%98ghar-wapsi%E2%80%99/article60160384.ece>

¹²⁵ Eram Agha, "Church turned into 'temple' after 72 Valmiki's reconvert to Hinduism", Aug 28, 2014. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/41029431.cms?intenttarget=no>

¹²⁶ Niha Masih, "Groups Linked to RSS Claim Conversion of 200 Muslims into Hinduism in Agra", Dec 09, 2014, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/groups-linked-to-rss-claim-conversion-of-200-muslims-into-hinduism-in-agra-710925>

¹²⁷ DC Correspondent. "Faith Matters: 'Ghar Wapsi' Boom in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh," 28 December 2014. <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/141228/nation-current-affairs/article/ghar-wapsi-boom-telangana-state-andhra-pradesh>

¹²⁸ Idem.

¹²⁹ "Andhra Pradesh Nationalists Push Christians to Mass Conversion," Nov 10, 2019. <https://www.heraldmalaysia.com/news/andhra-pradesh-nationalists-push-christians-to-mass-conversion-to-hinduism/50336/2-to-Hinduism>

¹³⁰ "39 Christians 'converted' by VHP in Kerala", 20 Jul 2015. [https://cjp.org.in/39-christians-converted-by-vhp-in-kerala/#:~:text=The%20Vishwa%20Hindu%20Parishad%20\(VHP,final%20step%20of%20the%20ritual](https://cjp.org.in/39-christians-converted-by-vhp-in-kerala/#:~:text=The%20Vishwa%20Hindu%20Parishad%20(VHP,final%20step%20of%20the%20ritual)

¹³¹ "35 'Reconverted' In Kottayam District," February 16, 2015, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/35-reconverted-in-kottayam-district/article6899926.ece>

¹³² M S Vidyandanan, "At 47%, Hinduism biggest gainer in religious conversion in Kerala", 02 Apr 2021 <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/Apr/02/at-47-hinduism-biggest-gainer-in-religious-conversion-in-kerala-2284660.html>.

¹³³ <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556265712267>.

¹³⁴ Kenneth John, "66k Hindus saved from conversion in 6 months last year: VHP report", Feb 09, 2025, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/lucknow-news/66k-hindus-saved-from-conversion-in-6-months-last-year-vhp-report-101739036455908.html>.

¹³⁵ Rupesh Samant, "Decades before RSS, A Goan Village Opted for Ghar Wapsi", 29 May 2015, https://www.heraldo.goa.in/goa/decades-before-rss-a-goan-village-opted-for-ghar-wapsi/213264/#goog_rewarded

¹³⁶ Editor, "Gustakh-e-nabi ki ek saja, sar tan se juda" is challenge to sovereignty and integrity of India: Allahabad High Court", December 20, 2025, <https://www.sconline.com/blog/post/2025/12/20/gustakh-e-nabi-ki-ek-saja-sar-tan-se-juda-challenge-sovereignty-integrity-all-hc/>

¹³⁷ Rev. Stainislaus vs State of Madhya Pradesh & Ors on 17 January, 1977, 1977 AIR 908, <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1308071/>.